

Laws to be amended — Abul Ragheb

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb on Saturday reiterated that the government would reconsider regulations and laws governing investments, including the investments, companies and income tax laws, and will amend them to serve the goals of the economic summit which will be hosted by Jordan in October. At a meeting with chairmen of the boards of directors of holding investment companies with capitals around JD 20 million, the minister said the government will also prepare the needed infrastructure for investment projects. The minister, who is chairman of the preparatory committee for the summit, urged representatives of the holding companies to participate with the government in preparing for the summit through offering proposals on investment projects and studying investment opportunities proposed by the government.

Queen, Crown Prince attend Spanish royal wedding

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor, Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath and several other members of the Royal Family Saturday attended the marriage ceremony of Spanish Princess Infanta Elena, daughter of King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia, and Jaime de Marichalar (see page 12).

Prince Abdullah in Abu Dhabi

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein arrived in Abu Dhabi Saturday on a several-day visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The visit comes at an invitation by the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff of the UAE armed forces Lieutenant-General Sheikh Mohammed Ben Zayed Al Nahayan to visit the international defence exhibition which will be opened there on Sunday. Prince Abdullah was received at the airport by Sheikh Abdullah Ben Zayed Al Nahayan, undersecretary of the ministry of information and president of the UAE soccer federation, and other government and military officials. Prince Abdullah is scheduled to hold talks with Sheikh Mohammed Ben Zayed Al Nahayan, the crown prince of the emirate of Dubai. More than 600 companies representing 43 countries manufacturing arms are participating in the exhibition which will last until March 23.

Jordan seeks help to free journalists

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabarti on Saturday called on the U.N., France and Russia to take action to help release a Jordanian journalist who was detained by Serb forces last month. In letters sent to U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, Mr. Kabarti called for the immediate release of the journalist, Naharawand Shana'ti, who has been held in Serb prisons for over a month.

15 Turkish soldiers killed in ambush

TUNCELI (R) — At least 15 Turkish soldiers were killed on Saturday and 25 wounded when Kurdish rebels ambushed a convoy of some 800 troops in the mountains of eastern Turkey, security sources said. The sources said the clash was still going on five hours after rebels from the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) attacked the convoy near the town of Tunceli at about 10.00 a.m. (0800 GMT). About 10 guerrillas were reported dead and Cobra helicopters and special units were sent in to reinforce Turkish troops still battling the rebels. Security sources said about 150 guerrillas ambushed the convoy of 40 lorries, each with about 20 troops.

Kuwait oilmen launch strike

KUWAIT (AP) — Hundreds of oil workers launched an open-ended strike Saturday, vowing not to return to their jobs until they get pay hikes. But officials said the stoppage will not affect oil production. "Production is the same and exports are the same," Bader Al Khashti, production and export operations manager with the state-run Kuwait Oil Company told reporters. The emirate currently produces two million barrels of crude a day. Most of that is for export. "There's been a very smooth transition. We have the manpower. They're managing the operation very well," Mr. Khashti said. KOC says it activated a contingency plan and called in personnel from other departments to fill in for the strikers.

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King meets German leader, reaffirms commitment to comprehensive peace

Rau says Germany is ready to help implementation of Jordan-Israeli treaty

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday reaffirmed Jordan's commitment to seeking a just, durable and comprehensive Middle East peace and a senior German leader said his country appreciated the Kingdom's role in the Arab-Israeli peace process.

The exchanges came during a meeting between King Hussein and Johannes Rau, prime minister of the German state of North-Rhine-Westphalia, who arrived here on a two-day visit leading a high-level trade delegation that includes representatives of several leading German companies.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, reporting the agency at the Raghadan Palace, said the King briefed Mr. Rau on the Middle East peace process and the steps that should be taken to advance the Arab-Israeli negotiations in the various tracks.

King Hussein "affirmed that Jordan has always been seeking to achieve comprehensive, just and durable peace in the region and will support its brotherly Arab countries in achieving progress in their negotiations with Israel," Petra reported.

The agency quoted Mr. Rau as voicing Germany's appreciation of King Hussein's role in the peace process and emphasizing that Germany "will support Jordan in implementing the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty" signed on Oct. 26.

Mr. Rau, who arrived here after visits to Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas and leaves Sunday for Syria, also said that Germany was looking forward to similar progress in the other tracks of Arab-Israeli peace talks.

The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Upper House of Parliament Speaker Ahmad Lawzi, Lower House Speaker Saad Hayel Sour, Royal Court Chief Marwan Al Qassem and Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabarti.

The official delegation accompanying Mr. Rau and the German ambassador in Jordan, Heinrich Reiners, also attended the meeting. In addition to being premier of North-Rhine-Westphalia, an industrialized region of Germany, Mr. Rau is also president of the German Bundestag (upper house).

In comments upon arrival at Amman Airport, where he was received by Mr. Lawzi,

Mr. Rau, who is accompanied by his wife, said Germany was following up the developments in the Middle East peace process with great interest and was also seeking to help remove hurdles in the path to peace.

Later in the day, the trade and industry team accompanying him held talks with their Jordanian counterparts at a meeting hosted by the Jordan Businessmen Association.

According to businessmen, the very presence of representatives of German multinationals such as Siemens in the delegation was an indication of German interest in exploring trade and industrial investment opportunities in the region, including Jordan.

Germany is a key donor of economic and technical aid to Jordan. The Bonn government has offered debt relief of around \$50 million to the Kingdom, which still owes Germany about \$470 million.

The last full-year figures show that Jordanian imports from Germany were around JD 202 million against exports of around JD 10 million in 1993. The figures were expected to have gone up slightly in 1994.

His Royal Highness Crown

(Continued on page 7)

Ramadan confirms detention of 2 Americans, urges focus on Iraqis

BAGHDAD (AP) — Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan indicated Saturday that Iraq is holding two Americans who crossed the border from Kuwait, but said: "Nothing much will happen to them."

In an interview in Baghdad with Associated Press TV, Mr. Ramadan declared: "Borders must be respected. There are rules and laws and this will be taken into consideration when dealing with anyone who does not respect this country."

Mr. Ramadan, who is considered the number two official in the government of Saddam Hussein, did not say categorically whether the two Americans would be put on trial or say where they are being held.

But he hinted at possible linkage to Baghdad's drive to get the United Nations Security Council to lift crippling trade sanctions imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

"I think those two, as far as those two are concerned, you should not pay much attention to them," he said in the first official Iraqi comment on the Americans' disappearance March 13.

"But you must pay attention to the 20 million starved by the American administration," he said.

The United States has blocked efforts by Russia and France to persuade the Security Council to ease, or lift, the embargo, which has caused withering hardships for the Iraqi people.

U.N. officials say the Americans were arrested Monday night after they crossed into Iraq from Kuwait to visit friends in a Danish engineering unit attached to the U.N. observer mission, which has been deployed along the border since the 1991 Gulf war.

Their whereabouts and condition were not known, despite intensive diplomatic efforts to track them down. U.S. and other officials declined to name the Americans and there was some confusion over their identities.

The Florida Times-Union newspaper reported Friday that one is David Dalbert, 41, of Jacksonville, Florida, according to his wife Kathy.

"It's just a terrible, terrible thing and I'm just about at my wit's end, not knowing if he's all right and how they're treating him," she was quoted as saying.

In Kuwait, the Arab Times newspaper quoted "unofficial sources" as identifying the missing men as Bill Bartoole and Steve Salazar who work for U.S. companies in

Kuwait.

The Arab Times said the men's families were in Kuwait, but were refusing to talk to reporters. The U.S. embassy in Kuwait declined all comment on that report.

U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said the two were civilian employees under contract to the U.N. Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission on the border.

In Washington, White House spokesman Mike McCurry said Friday that the missing men were employees of a private American company.

He stressed that the U.S. government cannot release their identities or information on their activities because of U.S. privacy laws.

Mr. McCurry said President Bill Clinton was briefed on the situation by National Security Adviser Anthony Lake.

Since the United States has had no diplomatic relations with Iraq since 1990, Washington has asked the United Nations and Poland, which handles U.S. interests in Baghdad, to investigate.

Salim Fahmawi, spokesman for the U.N. observer mission, said Friday night that the Americans drove to

(Continued on page 7)



His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday receives State Premier of North-Rhine-Westphalia Johannes Rau (Petra photo)

Iranians mourn Ahmad Khomeini

TEHRAN (Agencies) — Tens of thousands of mourning Iranians, many beating their heads and chests in grief, packed Tehran's streets on Saturday for the funeral of Ahmad Khomeini, son of Iran's late leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

For five hours, amid the emotional crowds, a lorry bearing Khomeini's coffin inched its way along the 25 kilometre route from a funeral ceremony at Tehran University to the mausoleum of Ahmad's father, south of the city.

The coffin, draped with the Iranian flag and strewn with red and white flowers, contrasted starkly with the surging masses of black-clad, grieving men and women.

At the funeral site, guards struggled to keep back the people so Ahmad's body could be taken into the

King sends condolences

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein on Saturday sent a cable to Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani condoling him over the death of Ahmad Khomeini.

mausoleum for burial next to his father.

An official at the shrine shouted for calm as the crowd surged round the coffin. "Calm down, get a grip on your emotions and allow the body to enter the shrine building and be buried," he appealed.

As the body moved to the shrine, men beat themselves in grief and Iranian Television showed some fell unconscious and had to be carried out.

The Iranian news agency IRNA reported that 119 people were given medical treatment because of the crush and four were hospitalised from "disorders resulting from profound grief."

(Continued on page 7)

Abbas to head self-rule negotiations — Fateh

TUNIS (Agencies) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) mainstream Fateh movement on Saturday renewed commitment to the peace process with Israel but adopted a new strategy for future negotiations and named a new team to conduct them.

"There is a new strategy for the negotiations which will not continue in their sterile form," Fateh Central Committee member Abbas Zaki said at the end of a four-day meeting to assess the slow-moving peace negotiations with Israel.

"There is a reconsideration of the previous stage regarding the decision-making, the form and the content in dealing with the negotiations operation in the future," Mr. Zaki said.

He said Mahmoud Abbas, the man who negotiated and signed the 1993 self-rule deal with Israel, would lead a new team in the negotiations to implement the accords.

"The commitment to the peace process is a strategic decision, but we are facing an enemy who has no consideration for Palestinian efforts for peace," the Fateh official said.

He refused to give further details.

Mr. Abbas refused to comment after the meeting but said a final statement would be released soon.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, who also heads Fateh, came under fire dur-

(Continued on page 7)

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AIR FRANCE

King leaves for U.S. March 24

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein is scheduled to leave for the United States on March 24 on a visit that would include the acceptance of a peace award, meetings with President Bill Clinton and senior administration and a routine medical check-up, officials said Saturday.

The King heads for Los Angeles on the first leg of the visit. There, he will deliver the keynote address at an event marking the International Year of Tolerance at the Simon Weisenthal Museum of Tolerance and accept the museum's annual prize for peace in recognition of his record for tolerance and commitment to peace.

Previous recipients of the award include former U.S. President Ronald Reagan, Queen Sofia of Spain, French President Francois Mitterrand, and human rights activist Andrei Sakharov.

A delegation from the Simon Weisenthal Centre visited Amman this month and was received by the King. Rabbi Abraham Cooper, head of the delegation, said the King had agreed to accept the award and also to visit the centre's Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles.

The King's meeting with President Clinton at the White House is set for March 27. The key topics for the meeting are expected to be the Middle East peace process, the progress in the implementation of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, Jordan's regional role and the Kingdom's economic and security needs.

It is expected that by the time of the White House meeting a bill allocating \$275 million to write off \$488 million in Jordanian debts would have cleared the U.S. Congress.

The King said last week after talks with the U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Amman that Jordan's quest to modernise its armed forces and realise its other needs would be discussed with President Clinton.

While in Washington, the King will also meet with members of Congress as well as senior administration officials including Mr. Christopher, Defence Secretary William Perry and Commerce Secretary Ronald Reagan.

(Continued on page 7)

In the name of God, the Merciful and the Most Compassionate

"Thou soul at peace, return unto thy Lord content in His good pleasure! Enter thou among My Bondmen. Enter thou My garden."

Al Fajr, 89

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Amman deeply mourns the death of

Hojatolislam Sayyed Ahmad Al Khomeini,

son of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Musawi Khomeini,

who passed away following a heart attack at the age of 50 which he spent in serving the noble causes and goals of Islam.

Deeply grieved and pained by this tragic loss, the Embassy will open at its premises a register to accept condolences over the death of the honourable sheikh from 9 a.m. till 6 p.m. on Monday March 20, 1995.

Gulf Arab ministers discuss Iraq and Iran

DUBAI (R) — Gulf Arab states were expected to differ again on how to deal with Iraq and Iran when their foreign ministers met in Saudi Arabia on Saturday, diplomats said.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) struck a solid front when Iraq invaded Kuwait, a member, in 1990, hosting the international alliance that drove the Iraqi army back out of the emirate and funding it with tens of billions of dollars.

But recently cracks in the edifice have begun to emerge.

By the understated standards of Gulf politics, Oman and Qatar dealt a stinging blow to Saudi Arabia when their foreign ministers failed to show in Jeddah for GCC talks with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

Instead, they held separate talks at home with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Sa'eed Al Sabah.

Although U.S. officials played down the significance of the ministers' absence — Qatar and Oman were represented by ambassadors at the Jeddah talks with Mr. Christopher — some diplomats say the move angered Saudi Arabia.

"Of course it is an insult to the Americans... how can they stay away from a meeting discussing, among other things, the most important issue for the U.S. in the Gulf — maintaining U.N. sanctions on Iraq," said an Arab diplomat familiar with the talks.

Both states also differ with some GCC partners, including Saudi Arabia, over improving relations with Iran, the region's non-Arab power which has often had tense ties with the alliance.

Gulf-based Arab diplomats also say some in the oil-rich GCC are unhappy with what they see as an increasing tendency by Saudi Arabia to treat them as "younger brothers" in the alliance which groups the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Bahrain.

"Due to its size and economic power, it is natural for Saudi Arabia to dominate the GCC and that has been accepted by other members," said one Arab analyst. "But now they want more dominance."

"Sometimes it appears if you want to deal with the



Health Minister Aref Batayneh on Saturday administers a polio vaccine to a child at the Princess Basma Health Centre (Petra photo)

Jordan launches polio vaccination drive

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Health on Saturday launched a national polio immunisation campaign targeting children under five throughout the Kingdom.

Minister of Health Aref Al Batayneh took part in the campaign when he vaccinated several children at the Princess Basma Health Centre.

Dr. Batayneh was assisted on the progress of the campaign at the centre, which serves the areas of Ras Al Ain, Jabal Amman, Al Mysdar, Al Hilal, Al Natheef and Al Thiraa.

The campaign, organised in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), was proceeding well in other parts of the Kingdom.

The campaign, which is in accordance with WHO and UNICEF's recommendations for a polio-free Jordan, aims to attain a national immunisation coverage rate above 90 per cent and contribute towards achieving global polio eradication by the year 2,000.

The polio vaccine is offered during the six-day campaign at all Ministry of Health centres, mother and child care centres and hospitals as well as Royal Medical Services, the Jordan University Hospital and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) medical services.

Remote areas not accessible to these centres will be serviced by mobile teams.

The vaccine will be available free-of-charge to all children residing in Jordan, irrespective of nationality, medical insurance or immunisation status.

During the campaign, each child under five years of age will be given the two doses of the polio vaccine, each in the form of two oral drops.

The two doses will be administered four weeks apart; the first dose during the week of March 18-23, and the second one during the week starting April 22.

Khomeini's son 'souvenir of the imam'

NICOSIA (R) — Ahmad Khomeini, who died on Friday at a Tehran hospital, was a junior Muslim cleric who gained influence as the father's top aide in the decade of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini led the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He had a heart attack on Sunday and doctors said he also suffered brain damage. He is survived by a wife and three sons.

Iranian officials and media dubbed him "the souvenir of imam (Khomeini)" and hard-liners often looked to him as a torch-bearer of Ayatollah Khomeini's more radical views.

But Ahmad Khomeini showed little political ambition after his father's death in 1989 and remained above the factionalism of Iranian politics. He never took any government posts though he served on several top policy-making councils.

While he often attacked "blood-sucking capitalists" in his speeches and praised armed struggle against Israel, he also backed President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's liberal reform policies.

"We should invite... experts from both political viewpoints in our country who still care (for the good of the country) to explain their views," he said in early March, referring to Iran's rival radical and conservative factions.

"It is not right to blame all of the difficulties on America, Western pressure and foreign elements," he told a gathering of university students and teachers, rejecting a view common among Iranian leaders.

After Ayatollah Khomeini's death, Ahmad lost his crucial position as liaison between the supreme leader and top state officials, but retained a high profile as overseer of his father's shrine south of Tehran.

He was the main speaker on many political and religious gatherings there and met foreign dignitaries such as South African President Nelson Mandela and Austria's then President Kurt Waldheim when they laid wreaths at Khomeini's tomb.

"I am a nobody, that is, I don't have a government job," he said in an interview published in Ettelaat newspaper in 1982. "My job is to relay news from the outside to the imam (Khomeini). Of course I can go many places because nobody stops me."

Ahmad told Ettelaat he became Khomeini's chief aide after his elder brother Mostafa died in 1977 under suspicious circumstances in Najaf, the Iraqi holy town where the ayatollah spent most of his 15 years of exile.

Born in 1947 and raised in the holy Shi'ite city of Qom south of Tehran, Ahmad twice crossed the border illegally to see his father in Iraq in the 1960s.

On returning from the second trip he was arrested by the Shah's dreaded secret police, Savak, and jailed for a few months. He was not mistreated in prison, he said.

Later he entered into underground political activities, setting up safe-houses and clandestine printing presses in Qom, Tehran and Isfahan.

Ahmad cooperated with groups led by clerics who became senior leaders in the Islamic republic such as Mr. Rafsanjani and Khomeini's successor as supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Evading Savak's reach, his wife picked up messages dropped by contacts at a Qom cemetery, he said. At some point he escaped to Pakistan for two weeks to cover his traces after a comrade's arrest.

In school, Ahmad was a naughty boy who was regularly caned right up to the 10th grade.

"I fled from school from the first day. Later, my father and teachers beat me to force me to go to class," he said.

"Much as I think, I can't figure out why they beat me so much," he said, adding that teachers forced him to break the ice on the school's pond and stick his hands into the water for half an hour as punishment.

In ninth grade he became the youngest member of the Qom football team, two years later its captain.

After high school he went to Tehran, where he tried out for the high-flying Shahin football club.

"Actually I wanted to join the team to go abroad and not come back. But I wasn't chosen — and rightly so, because the others were better," Ahmad said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran studying cooperation with Cuba

HAVANA (R) — Iran is studying cooperation with Cuba in the sugar sector, including the use of Cuban technology to develop its own sugar cane industry and an exchange of sugar for oil, Iranian officials said on Friday. Ali Danesh Monfared, head of a parliamentary delegation visiting Havana this week, told reporters Iran was especially interested in developing the sugar derivatives sector in areas such as animal feed production. Danesh Monfared, whose visit included talks with Cuban Sugar Minister Nelson Torres, noted there was a possibility for Iran and Cuba reaching an agreement for the exchange of oil for sugar. He said such issues would be discussed during a pending visit to Cuba by Iranian Commerce Minister Yahya Al Eshaq. This visit would take place in the next few months, he said. During a visit last month to Tehran by Cuban Foreign Investment Minister Ernesto Melender, Cuban and Iranian media reported that Cuba could send up to one million tonnes of sugar a year to Iran under an exchange agreement for imports of Iranian oil and other products.

'Poland to deliver Iran tanks by June'

WARSAW (AFP) — Warsaw is to deliver 70 Polish-made Soviet-style T-72 tanks to Iran by June, Polish sources said Friday, citing unofficial sources. The report came a day after controversy erupted within the government over plans to sell the tanks, with the Foreign Ministry scratching the proposal and the Industry and Trade Ministry challenging the decision. "It is not up to the Foreign Ministry to decide on such matters as weapons shipments," Roman Czerwinski, the deputy minister of industry and trade, told reporters. "The decision on such matters rests with the cabinet commission on defence matters." The Foreign Ministry said that the decision to cancel the shipment was made by the previous government headed by Waldemar Pawlak and was confirmed by the newly appointed foreign minister, Wladyslaw Bartoszewski. Mr. Czerwinski argued that if the decision is not reconsidered the weapons factories involved could see the state for more than 10 million dollars in damages. Although the United Nations has not imposed an embargo on the sale of weapons to Iran, the United States has sought to block such sales and slapped Tehran with unilateral trade sanctions. The Clinton administration and previous U.S. governments have been opposed to business deals with Iran for its alleged role in international "terrorism."

Iraq, IATA agree on training programme

NICOSIA (AP) — The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has agreed to run training programmes for Iraqi Airways personnel once U.N. trade sanctions are lifted, the official Iraqi News Agency reported Friday. The agency, monitored in Nicosia, quoted Khaled Mahdi, Middle East regional manager for the Geneva-based association, as saying that the courses will involve technical, engineering and business personnel. Under the U.N. embargo imposed after Iraq's Aug. 2, 1990, invasion of Kuwait, Iraqi Airways was barred from international routes. Military flight restrictions inside Iraq have effectively grounded the national carrier domestically as well. Several of Iraqi Airways' fleet of Boeing airliners were flown to Iran and Tunisia for safety during the 1991 Gulf war.

Man climbs pyramid 'to meet Solomon'

CAIRO (AFP) — A young Egyptian climbed to the top of the highest pyramid in Gaza on Friday for a meeting with Solomon, son of the Prophet David, police said. "Solomon gave me a rendezvous here," Gomaia Mohammad Gomaia told police, refusing for several hours to climb down from the Cheops pyramid. Police finally convinced the man, whom they described as mentally disturbed, to come down by explaining that the meeting place had changed and Solomon would be waiting at the bottom. The Cheops pyramid, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, rises to a height of more than 130 metres.

Egyptian opposition figure heads for Iraq

CAIRO (R) — The head of Egypt's Liberal Party is headed for Baghdad saying he hoped his mission would help end Iraq's isolation in the Arab World. Mustafa Kamel Murad, who left Cairo late on Friday, said he was going on a "goodwill mission to restore Arab solidarity and end the differences between Iraq and some Arab countries." Mr. Murad, whose party has no parliamentary members, is allied with the Muslim Brotherhood, told reporters before leaving that he would hold talks with Iraqi officials during his visit. He said he hoped he could follow up his Baghdad visit with trips to Sudan, Iran and Libya.

Demirel: No to hostility to Israel

ISLAMABAD (R) — Turkish President Suleyman Demirel said in an interview published on Saturday that the peace process in the Middle East should continue and hostility towards Israel should not be permanent. "Israel is a reality," Mr. Demirel was quoted as saying by the Pakistan daily the News. He told the paper Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was right to sign the 1993 accord with Israel for self-rule in Israeli-occupied areas. The Turkish president was in Pakistan, which does not recognise Israel, for a summit conference of the 10-nation Economic Cooperation Organisation early in the week which was followed by a three-day visit lasting until Saturday. Asked about Turkey's policy on Israel, Mr. Demirel said: "At the time of its creation we opposed it. But then Egypt made a deal with it, Yasser Arafat made a deal with it. Jordan made a deal with it. I do not think that hostility should be forever. You have to make some kind of peace."

U.S. was 'surprised' by Conoco-Iran deal

WASHINGTON (USIA) — The State Department's Acting spokeswoman, Christine Shelly, said Friday the State Department was "very surprised" by the announcement earlier this month that Conoco, a U.S. energy firm, had agreed to develop offshore oil gas fields for Iran in the Gulf.

President Clinton has since issued an executive order which had the effect of torpedoing the deal and Conoco has said it will not go ahead with the project.

Ms. Shelly said the department has "gone back and perused our own records" concerning conversations with Conoco officials.

"I don't know if our search at this point is exhaustive, but certainly from what we have been able to piece together, it is very much our impression that we learned of the discussions between Conoco and Iran in a kind of bits-and-

Egyptian dancers wage bump-and-grind battle

CAIRO (AFP) — A hip-shaking war is raging between Egyptian bellydancers and a wave of Russian competitors who have invaded the nightclubs of Cairo, the temples of Oriental dance.

More than 100 Russian dancers currently undulate on Cairo stages, about a third of the professional Egyptian dancers registered with the vice squad, a high-ranking vice squad officer told AFP.

They began arriving in Egypt in the early 1990s after the break-up of the Soviet Union, he added.

"They have come to Cairo not to dance but to earn their living by rather disreputable means," said Egyptian dancer Hindyia, hinting that the Russians have turned to prostitution.

Her colleague "Suzy" was more vehement. "The Russians have nowhere near our talent and their arrival has lowered the quality of Oriental dance as well as put dozens of Egyptian dancers out of work," she said.

"I dance with my body, my feelings and my emotions while they just wiggle mechanically to the rhythm of Oriental songs which they memorise without knowing the meaning because they don't understand the beauty of our language," seethed Suzy.

"But the true lovers of Oriental dance don't like these newcomers. It's only those who want to go to bed who drool after them," she added.

"Pussy," her sister, complained that since the Russians came, she has been forced to cut her engagements down to two venues a night rather than five.

For nightclub owners, the Russians are a bargain. "If an Egyptian dancer takes an average \$120 for every show, the Russian earns about \$45," Bahaa Garhi, manager of the Lotus nightclub on Pyramids Street, told AFP.

Moreover, the Russians "always come on time, they aren't too demanding and they don't create problems like the Egyptians often do," he said.

Admitting that the Russian dancing "level is lower than the Egyptians," Mr. Garhi added that "clients like whatever is new and the Russians have their fans as well."

Egypt boasts one bellydancer per 5,000 inhabitants. However, the vast majority of them are not professionals and only go on stage during weddings or private parties.

"Helena," a Russian, 30, denied that she and her companions are undercutting the market. "I perfected my art with Egyptian dance experts, among them Ibrahim Aket," a well-known bellydance instructor, she said.

"I have adored this dance since my childhood and take as my role models the famous Egyptian stars of Oriental dance," she added.

"I am a respectable woman and it is no shame to dance for a living. I'm not looking to start up competition with the Egyptians," she said.

Gulf Arabs, the richest and most dedicated bellydance fans, continue to prefer the Egyptian dancers, literally throwing their money at them. Appreciative spectators toss money onto the stage for the dancer.

"The Russians do both Western and Oriental dance. They are better in the Western but Egyptians are incomparable in the bellydance," said Khamis, a Saudi tourist catching Suzy's act at the Pyramids Hotel cabaret, told AFP.

Jordan Times tel. 667171

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel. 73111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
17:30 Le Prince La Sirene
17:35 Pyramide
18:00 Tour Du Monde Tour Du Ciel
18:00 News In French
19:15 The Bold and the Beautiful
20:30 Almost Home
21:00 The Album Show
21:30 Heartbeat
22:00 News In English
22:30 Feature film: "Freeze Frame"
23:59 The Hidden Room

PRAYER TIMES
04:31 Fajr
05:38 Sunrise
11:54 Dhuhur
15:10 Asr
17:50 Maghreb
19:07 Isha

CHURCHES
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St. Joseph Church, Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Torrens Church Tel. 622666

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Temperatures are expected to drop slightly with clouds building up. Scattered showers are expected in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom and winds north-westerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, moderate weather conditions will prevail with winds northerly moderate and seas calm.
Min./Max. temp. 7/14
Aqaba 13/23

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Deserts 6 / 19
Jordan Valley 12 / 20

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 16, Aqaba 24 Humidity
readings: Amman 20 per cent.
Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Bahjat Badr 849362
Dr. Salama Al Dabab 776751
Dr. Bassam Karadshah 739200
Dr. Nidal Al Dahleh 827195
First pharmacy 661912
Simeon pharmacy 637035
Al Asma pharmacy 637035
Nairokh pharmacy 636672
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Simeon pharmacy 637035
Nairokh pharmacy 636672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Faysal Al Qadi 248743
Aqaba pharmacy (-)

ZARQA:
Dr. Abdul Karim Khashash 543003

EMERGENCIES
Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 601111
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 611111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 698900
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 731111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalid Maternity, J. Amn. 644281/6
Abdali Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Mafes, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shamsi 664171/4
Shamsi Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Mushtaq Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Abdi, Abdali 654164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155

ZARQA:
Zarqa Gov. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
The Sima Hospital (09)986732
Al Hilma Modern Hospital (09)990990
Princess Basma Hospital (02)755555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)727275
Rm Al Nafes Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (06)532000, 5 where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
05:35 Bangkok (RJ)
07:15 Aqaba (RJ)
08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
09:45 Damascus (RJ)
09:45 Larnaca (RJ)
09:55 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
10:15 Beirut (RJ)
10:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
11:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
11:20 Vienna (RJ)
11:40 Brussels, Geneva (RJ)
11:55 London (RJ)
12:40 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
13:40 Athens (RJ)
13:55 Vienna (RJ)
14:30 Frankfurt (RJ)
21:45 Rome (RJ)
23:05 Aqaba (RJ)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
05:00 Aqaba (RJ)
06:25 Beirut (RJ)
10:30 Frankfurt (RJ)
10:45 Aqaba, Rome (RJ)
10:55 Vienna (RJ)
11:15 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:30 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:50 Athens (RJ)
12:00 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
12:05 Damascus (RJ)
12:45 New Delhi (RJ)
12:45 Aqaba (RJ)
13:40 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
13:55 Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
22:00 Bangkok (RJ)
22:45 Samsa (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)
12:35 Manama (GF)
14:25 Moscow (SU)
20:25 Cairo (MS)
21:20 Beirut (ME)
22:55 Istanbul (TK)
01:10 Amsterdam (KL)

MARKET PRICES
Upper/lower price in fils per kg
Apple 700/500
Banana 600/400
Banana (Malakani) 600/400
Cabbage 100/50
Carrot 100/50
Cauliflower 100/50
Cucumbers (large) 120/80
Cucumbers (small) 220/120
Eggplant 140/80
Garlic 1200/800
Green beans 220/120
Lemon 320/200
Mango (large) 100/50
Mango (small) 100/50
Onion (green) 200/120
Onion (dry) 300/200
Orange 500/300
Peach 500/300
Pepper (hot) 500/300
Pepper (sweet) 320/200
Potato 100/50
Spinach 500/300
String Beans 500/300
Tomato 500/300

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN
Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

WHAT'S
FILM
"Land and Deliver"
at 5:00 p.m.
"Old Night"
at 7:30 p.m.
CONCERT
"Land and Deliver"
at 5:00 p.m.

Jordan, Bahrain pledge to advance coordination in the information field

AMMAN (Agencies) — Jordan and Bahrain Saturday pledged to enhance methods of coordination in the information field and stressed on increasing cooperation between the two countries at all levels.

In a meeting between Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and Bahraini Information Minister Tareq Al Mu'ayyad, Sharif Zeid stressed the importance of exchanging information, news and expertise between the two countries.

Mr. Mu'ayyad, who Saturday was received by His Majesty King Hussein at the Royal Court, arrived in Amman on Friday on a three-day official visit to the country.

The prime minister said that his government, "under the directives of King Hussein, was keen to develop relations with Bahrain, particularly in the field of information."

The Jordanian and the Bahraini sides reviewed bilateral relations and ways of enhancing them, not only in the information field, but also in working on national, regional and international issues as well as ways of reviving Arab solidarity.

Mr. Mu'ayyad's visit, which followed a trip to Bahrain by Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabarti, was the first of a Bahraini minister to the Kingdom after relations were strained in 1990 following the Gulf crisis.

Upon his arrival in the Kingdom Friday, Mr. Mu'ayyad said Bahrain supports Jordan's efforts to rally Arab ranks.

Mr. Mu'ayyad, as well stressed on ways of cooperation between Bahrain and Jordan, especially in exchanging information, news and expertise in the information field.

In a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information Khaled Karaki, Mr. Mu'ayyad said his country is keen on upgrading the level of cooperation and coordination in the two countries by exchanging expertise and information in all fields.

Most important of all, the Bahraini minister said, was coordinating and unifying the political and cultural information policy between the two countries.

He said Jordan and Bahrain can make full use of the experiences and technical information that both sides have.

Mr. Mu'ayyad also concentrated on exchanging local news and promoting information about both countries in the different media.

Dr. Karaki said both countries have a certain responsibility to share in the area of information in the current stage developing in the region. "It is a national responsibility," Dr. Karaki said.

Attending the meeting were Secretary General of the Ministry of Information Nayef Manla, Director General of Jordan Radio and Television Corporation Issam Ramzi, Director of the Jordanian News Agency, Petra, Abdullah Etoum and Director of the Press and Publications Department Mohammad Amin.

The accompanying Bahraini delegation at the meeting was made up of Ministry of Information Assistant Undersecretary for Radio and Television Affairs Hala Al Umran, Director of Bahrain Radio Abdul Rahman Abdullah, Director of the News Department at the Radio and Television Corporation Abdul Al Rayyani, head of the corporation's television production Qashtan Al Qashtani, Al Ayyam newspaper Chief Editor Nabil Al Hammar and Al Khalij News Director General Anwar Abdul Rahman.



Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Saturday receives Bahraini Minister of Information Tareq Al Mu'ayyad at the Prime Ministry where the two officials reviewed bilateral relations (Petra photo)

Princess Basma urges more cooperation between QAF, population committee

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Saturday attended a meeting of the National Population Committee at the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAFSD) (Petra photo).

Princess Basma said QAFSD has offered to house the general secretariat of the committee out of its faith in the important role it plays in monitoring population changes and preparing population policies and programmes to serve national development plans.

Labour Minister Nader Abul Shaar, who is chairman of the committee, thanked Princess Basma for her support.

The Cabinet recently decided to consider the committee as a main reference on population information and reshuffled its composition to make it more representative of governmental and non-governmental organisations concerned with population issues.

Committee Secretary General Nabil Salameh said the meeting reviewed the committee's achievements in 1994 as well as the national population policy and strategy draft document.

He said participants in the meeting set up a sub-committee to reconsider the draft document to include new data from the recent population census conducted by the Department of Statistics.

Princess Nafa'a inaugurates clinic for protection of agricultural animals

AMMAN (J.T.) — Deputising for Her Royal Highness Princess Zein Bint Al Hussein, Princess Nafa'a Al Hussein Saturday opened the new headquarters and clinic of the Jordanian Society for the Protection of Animals (JSPA) in the Wadi Seer district of Amman, according to JSPA statement.

The building housing the two new units was offered by the Greater Amman Municipality and was 50 per cent funded by the European Union (EU), said the statement.

The clinic will offer free veterinary treatment for many animals used in agriculture by small underprivileged owners in the area and in the surrounding villages of Salt and Madaba, the statement said.

The society operates a clinic in the Jordan Valley, nine kilometres south of Deir Alla at Talat Al Ramal, and two mobile clinics have been operating in both areas for several years. The Talat Al Ramal clinic was also 50 per cent paid for by the EU.

The JSPA, affiliated to and funded by the London-based Society for the Protection of Animals Abroad (SPAN), which provided the other half of the cost of both clinics, also has an education programme in some schools in Jordan. The programme aims at teaching children about the care and welfare of animals, stressing that if they are properly looked after, their working lives will be prolonged, thus benefiting their owners, many of whom depend on the animals in order to earn a living, the statement said.

The opening ceremony was attended by Lord Newall, president of SPAN, its chief executive Jeremy Holme, and Chatterpersoo Lady Slyn, the mayor of Wadi Seer and other officials and diplomats.

Minister attends women's day celebration

KARAK (Petra) — Deputising for Her Royal Highness Princess Basma, chairperson of the National Committee for Women, Minister of Culture Samir Habashneh Saturday attended a celebration of International Women's Day organised by the committee's branch in Karak in cooperation with the Karak Culture Department.

Mr. Habashneh delivered an address in which he paid tribute to the leadership of His Majesty King Hussein, saying the Jordanian leadership has sought to give women their rights and to enhance their participation in various fields of life.

Mr. Habashneh said Jordan was one of the first Arab countries to give women the right to vote and to seek elected office.

He said International Women's Day carries national dimensions, adding that Jordanian women have crossed a long distance in gaining their rights.

Still he called on women to exert more efforts and to work harder to take the positions they deserve in different fields of work.

The director of the Karak Culture Department also delivered an address and commended achievements by Jordanian women.

Noting that this celebration was a recognition of women's achievements, he lauded Princess Basma's efforts in supporting women's issues.

The celebration was attended by the governor of Karak, government officials and representatives of women's societies.

Airline passenger with AIDS taken to hospital — officials

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A Canadian passenger who arrived from abroad at Queen Alia International Airport (QAIA) last Wednesday was taken to Al Bashir Hospital after airport health officials discovered she was infected with the AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) virus.

The passenger, a 32-year-old woman identified only as L.H. arrived in Amman late last Wednesday night and was sick, a source told the Jordan Times.

The source could not reveal the woman's point of departure, however, the only airline arriving at QAIA late Wednesday night was Olympic Airways from Athens at 10:30 p.m.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the source told the Jordan Times Saturday that the woman was taken to the airport clinic for treatment upon arrival.

"The woman had symptoms of AIDS, and after she was examined, we discovered that she had the AIDS virus," the source said.

The woman was then transferred to Al Bashir Hospital for treatment, the source said.

Another source told the Jordan Times that the health authorities at QAIA usually receive advance information on any arriving passenger suspected of carrying a disease, and "they give us the passenger's full name and the flight he/she is arriving on."

"We notify immigration officers, and they seize the passenger's passport and transfer him/her to the health department at the hospital," the source added.

According to an official at Al Bashir Hospital, the woman was admitted, but he would not say if the woman was still in hospital or was discharged.

The official told the Jordan Times that in similar cases, when the hospital receives foreign nationals infected with the AIDS virus the patients are treated then deported to their country of origin.

First, the official said, patients are admitted to the intermediate care section and stay in private rooms designated for patients infected with AIDS.

The patients are examined by a specialist at the hospital, and depending on his/her condition, "they will be deported to their country."

On December, the Ministry of Health announced that 116 Jordanians carry the AIDS virus since the discovery of the first case in 1986. At the same time, the numbers revealed that 30 Jordanians were among those infected.

The ministry launched awareness programmes since the discovery of the disease and has been adopting measures of screening donated blood, testing incoming visitors and controlling all blood transfusion processes.

House panel to ask for postponement of sales tax on some establishments

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament Finance Committee will ask Minister of Finance Basel Jarrah to postpone collecting sales taxes from restaurants and Confectionary shop owners until a court decision is taken on whether such a tax is applicable to these establishments, according to Committee Chairman Hashem Dabbas.

After meeting with several members of the Restaurant and Confectionary Shop Owners Association on Saturday, Dr. Dabbas said the committee will have to discuss this problem with Mr. Jarrah and request that he ask the Customs Court to speed up issuing its verdict on the issue.

Dr. Dabbas said the association members argued in the meeting that article 46 of the Sales Tax exempts service establishments from paying the tax.

They also said that the Minister of Industry and Trade has also issued a decision exempting confectionaries from the sales tax since they are considered service establishments and not industrial enterprises, added Dr. Dabbas.

AUB alumni to host medical conference

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The American University of Beirut (AUB) Alumni Club, Amman, will host a two-day medical conference at the end of this month.

Under the patronage of their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor, the opening ceremonies will commence at 9 a.m. on March 31 at the Jordan Inter-Continental Hotel.

All speakers will be from the AUB Medical College, including the Dean of Medical Sciences College Samir Najjar who will be lecturing on short stature.

This is the first time the Jordanian AUB Alumni Club has hosted a medical conference for the AUB. However, said Majed Ghosheh, president of the Amman AUB Alumni Association, the conference this year has special significance.

The AUB medical school and hospital suffered during the Lebanese civil war, said Dr. Ghosheh. "It needs a lot of 'moral' support right now," he said. The Alumni club is hosting the conference to emphasise the role that the AUB continues to play in medical science.

The conference is also being hosted in Amman to highlight the ties between Jordan and the AUB, Dr. Ghosheh said.

Three Jordanians sit on the AUB board of trustees. They are: Senator Leila Sharaf, the King's advisor on aviation Ali Ghandour and Senator Kamal Shaar.

"Our aim is to give a boost to AUB doctors and AUB graduates in Jordan, and to strengthen our links and information exchange between Jordanian and Lebanese doctors," he said.

Dr. Ghosheh, a local radiologist, emphasised that the conference is open to the public free of charge.

"The lectures have been planned to cater to the general population as well as professionals," he said.

The Thursday and Friday sessions will include lectures on the following topics: plastic surgery; epilepsy; cardiovascular surgery; breast, prostate and blood cancer; menopause and others.

Keynote addresses will be given by Edmund Shwayari, a professor of medicine for 50 years; Samir Alam, a cardiologist; Samir Atwek, a neurologist and Samir Najjar.

New envoys to Jordan present credentials

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabarti Saturday received the credentials of two newly-appointed ambassadors to the Kingdom.

Mr. Kabarti received the credentials of Yemeni Ambassador to Jordan Hassan Ahmad Al Lawzi who succeeded Ali Abu Laboon.

The minister discussed with Mr. Lawzi Jordanian-Yemeni relations and wished the Yemeni people "further prosperity."

Mr. Lawzi is a renowned Yemeni writer and poet. He served as his country's minister of information and culture several times since 1981.

Mr. Kabarti also received the credentials of Pakistani Ambassador to Jordan Ali Sarwar Naqvi who succeeded Tareq Khan Afridi.

The minister wished Mr. Naqvi success in carrying out his duties and in contributing to enhancing Jordanian-Pakistani relations.



Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabarti Saturday receives the credentials of new Yemeni Ambassador Hassan Ahmad Al Lawzi (above) and Pakistani Ambassador Ali Sarwar Naqvi (below) who also presented his credentials Saturday (Petra photo)



The Institute of Diplomacy's New Premises

This is to inform all concerned that with effect from Monday, March 20th, 1995, The Institute of Diplomacy will move to its new premises in the Um Uthainah district (at 59, Suleiman Al-Hadidi Street) as shown in the illustration below.

Following are the new address and telephone, fax, telex and P.O.Box numbers:

Tel. (926 - 6) 861000
Fax (926 - 6) 861008
Telex 24464 ID JO
P.O.Box 850746 Amman 11185 JORDAN

CONDOLENCES

The Editor and staff of the Jordan Times deeply mourn the death of

Najia Nouri Murad

grandmother of their friend and colleague Nermeen Murad who passed away yesterday.

May she rest in peace

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

- ★ Film entitled "Stand and Deliver" at the American Center at 5.00 p.m.
- ★ Oud night with Marc Loopy at the Marriott Hotel at 7.30 p.m.
- ★ Concert by Iraqi artist Ala' Sa'd at the Royal Cultural Centre on Monday at 8.00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Exhibition of abstract art by Abeer Bawwab at the Royal Cultural Centre. Also displaying oil paintings by Maimra Al Tunisiya.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by several artists entitled "Faces" at the Balqa Art Gallery, Fobeis.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Nazli Irtencelik at Alia Art Gallery.
- ★ Exhibition of art by Rula Shaker at the French Cultural Centre.

MARKET PRICES

Wheat: 100 kg 10.50
Barley: 100 kg 10.00
Oats: 100 kg 9.50
Soybeans: 100 kg 12.00
Cotton: 100 kg 15.00
Wool: 100 kg 18.00
Lard: 100 kg 14.00
Butter: 100 kg 16.00
Eggs: 100 kg 12.00
Chicken: 100 kg 18.00
Turkey: 100 kg 25.00
Pork: 100 kg 15.00
Beef: 100 kg 14.00
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Clinton opens White House to Irish nationalist leader

U.K. to announce Sinn Fein talks 'in days'

WASHINGTON (AP) — Acting as St. Patrick's Day peacemaker, President Bill Clinton welcomed Irish nationalist Gerry Adams, an ally to the outlawed Irish Republican Army (IRA), to a White House reception Friday night.

In a measure of the lingering pain of Northern Ireland's sectarian bloodletting, a Protestant politician whose father was killed by the IRA said he'd find it "very difficult" to be in the same room.

Technically, the White House celebration was in honour of Prime Minister John Bruton of Ireland. The Clintons — Mr. Clinton in an Irish green tie and the lady in a green dress — escorted the prime minister and his wife, Finola, down the state staircase as an Irish bagpiper led the way.

But it was the invitation to Mr. Adams that drew the most notice: Open annoyance from the British government, high praise from

Mr. Bruton and the legions of Irish nationalist supporters in the United States.

Mr. Adams was among the guests greeted by the president in the receiving line.

In a luncheon speech, Mr. Bruton praised Mr. Clinton for showing "great wisdom" with his decision to invite Mr. Adams to the White House. "One should never underestimate the extent to which people in Ireland look to the United States for inspiration and encouragement," he said.

As Mr. Adams pointed out, St. Patrick's Day is a holiday more celebrated in the United States than in Ireland.

At the White House, a buffet laid out for the 350 guests included smoked Irish fish, soda bread, Dublin Bay prawns, and West Cork crab-meat, Irish breakfast canapés, Limerick ham, Irish whiskey, and strawberry shortcake pie.



President of Sinn Fein Gerry Adams points to his glass as he speaks across the East Room of the White House during a St. Patrick's Day party. Mr. Adams' visit to the White House has infuriated Great Britain due to his ties to the Irish Republican Army (AFP photo)



U.S. President Bill Clinton walks into the East Room of the White House as Gerry Adams (right with beard and glasses) of Sinn Fein watches. Mr. Adams has been in the U.S. on a ten-day fund-raising trip and was invited to the White House to celebrate St. Patrick's Day (AFP photo)

the guerrilla organisation that seeks to oust the British from Northern Ireland and unite the Protestant-dominated province with the overwhelmingly Roman Catholic Irish Republic to the south.

In a speech at the National Press Club, Mr. Bruton said that if lasting peace is to come to Northern Ireland, the politicians on all sides must start talking to one another and the huge store of arms must be "put out of commission."

Earlier Friday, Mr. Adams told a news conference that Sinn Fein, the party he leads, has "no authority or control over arms."

Mr. Adams also denied he has ever been a member of the IRA.

Mr. Bruton told reporters that even though Mr. Adams did not have technical influence over the IRA's arms, "he has tremendous influence over the IRA."

Sinn Fein is a legal political party that supports the IRA.

His father, John McMichael, deputy commander of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), was killed by the IRA in 1987. The illegal UDA is an umbrella organisation for Protestant vigilante groups.

Mr. McMichael met with Anthony Lake, White House national security adviser hours before the holiday reception.

After the Lake meeting, Mr. McMichael said he had come to Washington "to oppose Sinn Fein propaganda. World opinion is important to Northern Ireland and we've got to be prepared to change it if it's wrong."

Mr. McMichael said he would attend the reception, but "it's very difficult for me to be in the very room Gerry

Adams is in."

British Prime Minister John Major didn't try to hide his annoyance over the invitation to Mr. Adams as well as the decision to allow him to raise money in the United States.

Over the past several days, Mr. Major was unavailable to take two telephone calls from Mr. Clinton. Spokesmen for the two leaders said they would talk this weekend.

Mr. Clinton's spokesman Mike McCurry was asked if the strains meant the "special relationship" between the two countries was dead.

"I can recall at least six times in which the special relationship has been declared dead," said Mr. McCurry.

Beatles song to get first single release

LONDON (AP) — A Beatles song will get its first release as a single Monday, more than 30 years after the fab four recorded it. EMI Records announced. Baby It's You, with the late John Lennon as lead singer, was released just before Christmas as part of the album The Beatles Live At The BBC, which sold more than 5 million copies worldwide. EMI Records said the band recorded a version of the hit by the U.S. group the Shirelles. The group broke up in 1970, and Lennon was shot dead in 1980 in New York. The record company said there will be three other unreleased tracks on the EMI/Apple single, taken from Beatles' radio recordings. The record is not a reissue, an EMI spokeswoman said. It was never released as a single before, she said. On Wednesday, former Beatle Paul McCartney announced another Beatles recording due out this year. McCartney said in New York that a vintage Lennon vocal, refitted with music from the rest of the band, is one of several new tracks due out later this year from the three surviving members. The vocal, Free As A Bird, was completed by the remaining Beatles in February 1994. Lennon recorded his vocal on Free As A Bird in 1974. McCartney said George Harrison and Ringo Starr have joined him to do an additional "couple of tracks." "These tracks will be released at the end of this year as a couple of cherries on the cake of The Beatles Anthology," he said.

China's parliament flexes muscles

BEIJING (R) — China's parliament, historically a rubber-stamp for the ruling Communist Party, delivered a second snub in two days Saturday when large numbers of deputies declined to back a law on the central bank.

Premier Li Peng, however, welcomed the dissenting voices as evidence of greater democracy in the National People's Congress. It was a "practical, realistic" meeting, he told reporters after the closing session of the two-week annual meeting.

The new law on the central bank was passed, but won the support of only 66 per cent of deputies, an unusually low figure. Of the 2,678 deputies present, 1,781 voted in favour, 509 voted against, 360 abstained and 28 did not vote.

Deputies have criticised the central bank law, saying it gives supervision of the bank's monetary policies to the State Council, or cabinet, and not to the parliament or its standing committee, which could act as a more independent supervisor.

China's first education law won slightly more support but still showed significant opposition, with 1,989 — or 74 per cent — in favour, 354 against, 307 abstentions and 28 not voting.

The biggest slap in the face for China's rulers came on Friday when nearly one-third of deputies rejected the government's choice for the vice-premier to be in charge of the huge agriculture portfolio. It was largest proportion of protest votes.

On Saturday, many deputies had opposed China's first education law, saying it failed to commit the government to a minimum level of spending. Many called for a figure of four per cent of gross national product.

Many legislators say current funds cannot meet the demands of educating China's tens of millions of children.

Sri Lanka rebels free 14 after flexing muscles

COLOMBO (AFP) — Tamil separatist guerrillas Saturday freed 14 security personnel held since 1990 in what they called a "goodwill" gesture to breathe life back into faltering peace efforts.

The powerful Liberation Tigers Tamil Eelam (LTTE) released 13 policemen and an army soldier, who had been on a hunger strike with the 14 others since the beginning of the month demanding government action to speed up their release.

In a speech marking the release of the hostages, the LTTE's political chief Tamil Chelva described it as "a gesture of goodwill" to people in the south, largely inhabited by the country's Buddhist Sinhalese majority.

The LTTE, which controls large parts of the north, has been fighting for a separate state in the northeast for Sri Lanka's two million Hindu Tamils.

The 16 men freed by the rebels were among 40 security personnel that the LTTE says it has been holding since 1990.

As the LTTE released the hostages, the government simultaneously announced that it had set up an additional checkpoint in the military-held region of Vavuniya to ease the flow of goods to the north.

"Security forces will now be able to check much larger numbers of vehicles and clear the backlog. Earlier because of one checkpoint the vehicles were delayed for days during checking," a military spokesman said.

Goods transported to LTTE-held areas in the north previously had to be approved by security forces manning a checkpoint in Vavuniya, the northernmost area under government control.

Police arrest a 65-year-old '1st-time mother'

LAGOS (AFP) — Police in Nigeria have arrested a 65-year-old woman who recently claimed to have given birth to her first child, the Daily Times newspaper said here.

The pro-government daily said police arrested Wurao Abayomi at her home in Ojo, a northern suburb of Lagos after given birth to a baby. When news of the birth was broken on television, Ms. Abayomi became an instant national celebrity, receiving a steady flow of gifts, guests and journalists who trooped to her house to see what was widely referred to as the "miracle child." But police arrested her along with the midwife who claimed to have delivered the child, the spiritualist who claimed to have offered prayers and spiritual guidance, and the journalist who first reported the story, the paper said.

Altman film Ready To Wear banned in Germany

HAMBURG, Germany (AFP) — A court has banned the distribution in Germany of the film Ready To Wear by U.S. director Robert Altman at the request of Paris-based German fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld. The ruling came six days before the film's scheduled release in Germany. But the court in this northern city indicated it would clear the movie for national release if passages it deemed detrimental to Lagerfeld were excised.

The ruling by the judge in Hamburg, which is Lagerfeld's home town, said "as long as Mr. Karl Lagerfeld is described as a thief" and a "plagiarist" in the work it will be banned from showing in Germany. The film, which is also shown under the title "Pret-A-Porter" and caricatures the world of high fashion, has met with mixed reviews. It was due to open in Germany on March 23, after its recent release in Paris — Mr. Lagerfeld's adoptive home where he works for the Chanel fashion house.

Detective says Simpson was a 'very strong suspect' from start

LOS ANGELES (AP) — O.J. Simpson became "a very strong suspect" in two murders six hours after the bodies were found and was briefly handcuffed, but police freed him because of a crushing "media fest," a lead detective testified.

"I had enough probable cause to make an arrest, absolutely," detective Philip Vannatter said Friday of evidence discovered within six hours of the slayings.

As he testified, jurors and the television audience got their first looks at photographs of blood on the beige interior of Mr. Simpson's Ford Bronco, which was parked outside his home that morning, and blood drops on the hardwood floor of his home's entranceway.

For jurors, it was the first clear account of why Simpson was arrested and what physical evidence the prosecution is using to build a case portraying the ex-football star as the killer of Nicole Brown Simpson, his ex-wife, and Ronald Goldman.

Simpson, a professional football star who became a movie actor and television sports commentator after his playing career ended in 1979, has pleaded innocent to the murders. He faces a life in prison if convicted.

It was a slightly different jury Friday that heard Mr. Vannatter's assertions. In the fifth dismissal from the trouble-wracked panel, a 52-year-old Amtrak manager was dismissed. Sources told the Associated Press he was suspected of writing a book. His hotel room was searched and a laptop computer was found.

Tracy Kennedy, 52, said he was told Friday morning that he was being excused. In a statement, he said he felt "devastated and overwhelmed."

"There was no physical confrontation, no personal conflict, no race problems, no money offered or accepted," Mr. Kennedy's statement said. It did not mention the allegations about a book.

Singapore slams claim hanged Filipina was innocent

SINGAPORE (R) — The Singapore government issued a lengthy and strongly worded rebuttal Saturday of 11th-hour claims by an ex-climate of hanged Filipina maid Flor Contemplacion that she was innocent of a double murder charge.

Ms. Contemplacion's execution has sparked major protests in the Philippines, where thousands of mourners turned out Saturday to give her body a hero's welcome as it passed through the streets of Manila and later in her hometown of San Pablo.

The Philippine Ministry said that Ms. Contemplacion told her, while both were in Changi Prison, that when visiting Della Maga the two maids had discovered the boy, Nicholas Huang, had drowned.

In the affidavit Ms. Parumog claimed Ms. Flor told her that, "Della immediately phoned her employer about the incident. Her male employer, immediately rushed home. Very angry, the employer strangled Della's neck."

Then, the affidavit states, the employer called the police and implicated Flor in the double murder.

But, according to the Home Ministry, the facts are that when the police arrived Ms. Contemplacion was not at the scene. She was traced later through entries made in Della Maga's diary. In addition, the Home Ministry said, it was not the boy's father who phoned police it was the mother.

The Home Ministry statement dismissed other claims made by Ms. Parumog including that Ms. Contemplacion had undergone electric shock treatment while awaiting trial and had been drugged.

The ministry said Flor was given two electroencephalogram (EEG) tests, one of which was ordered by her own defence psychiatrist. As for drugs, the ministry said, Flor was given medication only for headaches and a sore throat.

Burmese send in reinforcements against Shan rebels

IN SHAN STATE, Burma (R) — Burmese government reinforcements were moving into the mountains of north-eastern Shan state Saturday to try and reach comrades locked in battle with guerrillas loyal to Burma's opium warlord Khun Sa.

Guerrilla officers said 14 government army trucks packed with soldiers and heavy weapons were advancing towards their mountain stronghold in the eastern part of the state where 600 government soldiers have been pinned down by the ethnic minority rebels since Wednesday.

"We were hoping they would just withdraw but it doesn't look like that will happen now. We're going to have to fight them," a regional commander in Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army (MTA) told Reuters.

The officer, who asked not to be identified, said his men were ambushing government troops as they moved into the mountains from the town of Tachilek on the border with Thailand.

Artillery explosions boomed across the mountains from the battle as he spoke at an MTA outpost near the border.

The MTA blew up a bridge on a main supply road linking Tachilek to the battle Friday and detonated a large bomb killing several government troops at another location on the road Thursday, the officer said.

Burmese forces began their push against the MTA-held area, 25 kilometres west of Tachilek, Tuesday. Heavy fighting erupted early Wednesday and continued throughout the day as the guerrillas attacked the advancing government troops and managed to cut them off in a valley overlooked by mountain-top rebel strongholds, rebel officers said.

Intermittent clashes have continued since then with the rebels and government troops dug in just 50 metres from each other in some places.

"This area is very close to Tachilek and Tachilek is important for the SLORC economy," said another guerrilla officer, Chit Shwe, referring to Burma's ruling military body, the State Law and Order Restoration Council.

Tachilek lies at the centre of a planned economic development zone known as the Growth Quadrangle linking booming Thailand and southern China with resource-rich Burma and Laos.

Beatles song to get first single release

Yeltsin offer on V-E parade improves summit chances

WASHINGTON (AP) — Boris Yeltsin's acceptance of a U.S. request to avoid military hardware displays at a 50th anniversary celebration of the allied victory in Europe (V-E) improves chances President Bill Clinton will go to Moscow in May, administration officials said Friday.

The visit would include a summit meeting between the two leaders on several touchy issues, including the heavy civilian toll Russia has taken in fighting independence-minded rebels in Chechnya and Russia's cooperation with Iran in the construction of a nuclear reactor complex near the Gulf.

Mr. Yeltsin responded favourably in early March to a U.S. request not to display military forces at the May 9 celebration in Moscow and then told foreign editors from several newspapers Thursday he would tailor the Red Square parade to suit Mr. Clinton.

The president "is somewhat concerned by the planning of the event. He does not want there to be a military parade. I think we will comply with these preconditions," Mr. Yeltsin was quoted as telling the editors.

Mr. Clinton said Friday that he appreciated Mr. Yeltsin's remarks and that he expected to make a decision about "that whole set of issues very shortly."

White House Press Secretary Mike McCurry said the parade was not the only aspect of the summit that was under discussion.

Other administration officials said a consideration was scheduling Clinton stops in Britain and France, as well, for V-E Day celebrations there.

But the officials said that Clinton probably would go and that Mr. Yeltsin's arrangements for the parade would improve chances of his acceptance of the invitation.

"We want to celebrate victory over fascism in World War II, but in a way that does not send a Russian military signal to the world, to the American public and to Congress," said one official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"Yeltsin's offer lends itself to that."

Secretary of State Warren Christopher will meet next week in Geneva with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev on the likely summit agenda, which also includes Russia's concern about NATO's possibly taking in former Warsaw Pact allies next year as members.

Mr. Clinton is prepared to exchange letters with Mr. Yeltsin to assure him the alliance was not an anti-Russian bloc.

Mr. Clinton wants to come but is "a bit concerned about the whole scenario," Mr. Yeltsin told the foreign editors of seven newspapers.

In the interview, Mr. Yeltsin said he would limit the parade in Red Square to war veterans.

Mr. Yeltsin has been urging Mr. Clinton to join other Western leaders in Moscow on V-E Day, then attend a summit meeting.

Mr. Clinton has given no definitive response. They agreed at a summit in Washington last September to meet again in Moscow in the first half of 1995.

The administration, while critical of some of Russia's actions, is determined to work with Mr. Yeltsin in the interest of political and economic reform. The State Department and the Agency for International Development are trying to persuade Congress not to cut aid to Russia.

If Mr. Clinton decides to accept the Russian president's invitation and attend the May 9 event will the leaders of Britain and Germany follow?



United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (right) greets Croatian President Franjo Tudjman (left) upon his arrival at the U.N. in New York (AFP photo)

Sarajevo Airport attacks may be considered war crimes — U.N.

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — Serb attacks on United Nations and Red Cross planes landing at Sarajevo's airport in recent days could qualify as war crimes under international law, a U.N. source said Saturday.

United Nations officials were considering whether to prosecute those responsible for firing on planes using the airport, the U.N. source told Reuters.

"We think the attacks qualify as war crimes and we are investigating the possibility of prosecuting under international law," said the U.N. source who asked not to be named.

Four planes have been hit by Serb gunfire in the past eight days.

An international Red Cross plane was holed by Serb heavy machinegun fire while landing here on March 11 and a U.N. plane carrying special envoy Yasushi Akashi and his top two military commanders was hit the next day.

Those incidents were enough to cause a suspension of Red Cross and U.N. humanitarian aid flights into the city, but U.N. administrative flights carrying peacekeepers and civilian personnel continued.

Two of those flights were then hit by heavy machinegun fire within minutes of one another while landing in Sarajevo Friday afternoon.

The firing points are assessed to be Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) positions. U.N. spokesman Alexander Ivanov said Saturday.

The United Nations will take all necessary steps to ensure the airlift continues into Sarajevo and the military option is one possibility. If the situation gets out of hand we might take steps to neutralise the firing points."

The Sarajevo Airport sits

between Bosnian government and separatist Serb lines west of the city and is a lifeline for the Bosnian capital's 380,000 residents.

A 20-year-old man was shot dead and three other people, including a woman in her 70s, were wounded by sniper fire Saturday morning in Sarajevo, hospital officials said.

Oliver Brkic was shot dead in the Dobrinja Quarter, in the west of the city near the confrontation line, a couple of hours after a woman in her 70s was wounded in the leg nearby.

A soldier, Muharem Demirovic, 53, was severely wounded with a shot to the leg in Mojiljo Brdo, a short distance away.

A 36-year-old woman, Fatimah Tahirovic, was also shot in the leg near the bridge of "brotherhood and unity," further into the city, hospital officials said.

A U.N. convoy entered northwest Bosnia Friday to relieve desperate food shortages, and Red Cross trucks carrying food for the hungry also proceeded after being blocked by Croatian Serbs.

U.N. officials have warned of severe malnutrition and even starvation in the besieged Bihac enclave, where about 200,000 people, most of them Muslims, depend solely on humanitarian aid.

Agency trucks carried 100 tonnes of beans, beef yeast, cooking oil, flour and fish into the region, Aleksei Lisinski, a spokeswoman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Zagreb.

"Every convoy is important," Ms. Lisinski said. "However, 100 tonnes of food are a drop in the ocean considering the enormous needs of the people in Bihac and the misery they have been facing for many months."

Mr. Tudjman ordered the U.N. troops to withdraw from the areas under rebel Serb control after March 31, arguing that their presence only helped consolidate a breakthrough state the Serbs proclaimed in 1991.

The move prompted fears of a renewed war with the Serbs and he recently rescinded his decision, under strong pressure from Washington, but he demanded that the U.N. presence in Croatia be halved and that they deploy on Croatia's international borders.

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Civilians hurt as Russian forces continue to pound Chechen town

SHALI, Russia (Agencies) — Four civilians were seriously injured as fierce fighting continued through the night between Russian forces and Chechen separatists near here, medical sources said.

The three women and a child were seriously wounded in the village of Belgatory, eight kilometres northeast of Shali and practically on the front line, according to a doctor at the Shali hospital where they were taken.

Villages fleeing Belgatory Saturday morning said it had been bombed by Russian warplanes throughout the night.

Shali lies 20 kilometres (12 miles) southeast of the Chechen capital Grozny and has become the de facto rebel capital since Grozny fell to the Russians in February.

Artillery barrages, fire from multiple rocket launchers and machine-gun fire could be heard until 5:00 a.m. (0200 GMT) along the entire front line to the west and southwest of Shali.

At least five rockets fell on two streets in the centre of

the town around 11:30 p.m. (2030 GMT) Friday, hitting three houses but injuring no one, residents said.

Khamzat Ismailov, pointing to the devastated courtyard of his house, said: "Myself, my wife, my four children and my mother were asleep when the rocket fell in the yard."

It gutted the barn and destroyed his car, while pieces of rocket and broken windows lay strewn across the courtyard.

"We were only sleeping 15 metres away. We survived by a miracle. Now we're going to get out," he said.

Chechen fighters returning from the front line, which runs along the banks of the river Argun to the south, said military positions remained unchanged.

Russian forces had reached Thursday a bridge controlling the western entry to the town, about six kilometres away.

The fighters said the village of Chechen-Ayul, near Belgatory and halfway between Shali and Grozny, had also suffered aerial and artil-

lery bombardment in the night, but Chechen separatists were still fighting there.

By midday Saturday intermittent artillery fire could be heard coming from the combat zone.

Argun and Shali, together with Gudermes, 30 kilometres (18 miles) east of Grozny, form the backbone of the Chechen resistance to the Russian armed intervention, launched on Dec. 11 to crush a three-year-old government of independence unilaterally declared by Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev.

The three towns enclose an arc of territory in the south-east of the Caucasus republic.

Meanwhile a search team from St. Petersburg left for Chechnya Friday to look for two journalists who disappeared in a rebel-held region of the war zone two weeks ago.

Maxim Shabalin, a correspondent for the St. Petersburg daily Nevskoye Vremya and Felix Titov of the St. Petersburg daily Chas Pika, went to Chechnya in late February.

They have had no contact with their families or colleagues since early March, said Andrei Sharogradsky, a correspondent at Nevskoye Vremya.

The two went to the region without accreditation required by the Russian government for entering Chechnya. It was Mr. Shabalin's fourth trip to the battle zone since the Russia sent troops into the rebellious republic in December.

Mr. Sharogradsky said they were last seen heading to rebel-held territory on the outskirts of the capital Grozny.

Members of the search team had said they were ready to cross Chechnya on foot in search of the journalists, or at least information of their whereabouts.

The search team includes colleagues from Nevskoye Vremya and Chas Pika, other St. Petersburg journalists, city officials, and Mr. Shabalin's father. They will be joined by a Chechen official with ties to rebel leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, Mr. Sharogradsky said.

Crimean parliament debates Ukraine sanctions

SIMFEROPOL, Ukraine (R) — Parliament in Ukraine's pro-Russian autonomous region of Crimea, split into radicals and moderates, debated a response Saturday to the abolition of its constitution by Ukrainian authorities.

Outside, about 300 mainly elderly protesters shouted slogans in support of Crimea's separatist President Yuri Meshkov, whose job was also eliminated by the Ukrainian parliament Friday.

The glass and concrete building was ringed by police and paramilitary guards, and officials said an extra contingent of Ukrainian riot police had been dispatched to the region. But the centre of Simferopol, a dusty, featureless city, was quiet.

Parliament Chairman Sergei Tsekov told deputies they had three choices: —

ignore Ukraine's punitive action, reconcile themselves to it and draw up a new constitution or compromise by registering mild objections.

"I favour a carefully balanced decision," he said. "If we simply agree to the Ukrainian decision, the people might not understand it."

Deputy Chairman Vladimir Klychmikov, a moderate, suggested no decision would be taken immediately. Other moderates said radical measures could prompt Ukraine to dissolve their parliament altogether and strip the region of its autonomy.

Mr. Meshkov told deputies that Ukraine's decision was based on "hysteria" and said telephone lines to his office had been cut and his personal guard dismissed by police.

He then emerged from the building to shouts of approval from the crowd and urged

them to write letters to Russian authorities to support Crimea's separatist authorities.

"This situation reminds me of Germany in the 1930s. They're trying to intimidate us," he shouted. "Together we shall win."

Crimea's parliament stripped Mr. Meshkov of most of his powers last year during months of infighting between rival factions. Support for him in the chamber remains in question.

In Kiev, newspapers printed the national parliament's measures with unusual speed — officially making them law.

In addition to a ban on the constitution, long denounced by Ukrainian authorities as separatist, Kiev deputies voted to launch criminal proceedings against Mr. Mesh-

kov.

The actions were Ukraine's first major measures against Crimean separatism after three years of restrained admonitions to comply with the country's post-Soviet order.

President Leonid Kuchma urged deputies to take action, saying further delays could lead to unrest caused by similar procrastination in other former Soviet republics.

He was referring to Russia's campaign to quash separatism in Chechnya and President Nursultan Nazarbayev's dissolution of parliament in Kazakhstan.

Two-thirds of Crimea's people are ethnic Russians. Since the collapse of Soviet power, many Crimean politicians have scarcely concealed their aim of restoring Kremlin rule.

Bhutto says Ramzi Yousef tried to kill her in 1993

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP) — Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said Saturday she was the target of a 1993 assassination attempt by Ramzi Yousef, the man accused of orchestrating the World Trade Centre bombing in New York.

The attempt on her life took place in September or October 1993, several months after the attack on the World Trade Centre and shortly before Ms. Bhutto was elected prime minister, said Farhatullah Bahar, spokesman for the premier.

Mr. Yousef was armed with explosives and was headed towards Ms. Bhutto's private estate in Karachi, Mr. Bahar quoted Ms. Bhutto as saying in an interview.

However, one of the explosives went off prematurely and injured Mr. Yousef.

Government officials said they did not know how close Mr. Yousef came to Ms. Bhutto's home, called Bilawal House, a large property with high white walls near the ocean.

Mr. Yousef was treated at the Aga Khan Hospital in Karachi, but authorities did not know his identity at the time, said Information Secretary Hussein Haqqani.

Ms. Bhutto was targeted because she is considered a "moderate" Muslim leader,

the officials said.

Ms. Bhutto's account of events could not be independently verified, but it added a startling new twist to the case surrounding Mr. Yousef, who was arrested on Feb. 7 in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad and immediately extradited to the United States.

He has pleaded innocent to charges that he masterminded the Feb. 26, 1993, bombing of the World Trade Centre that left six dead and more than 1,000 injured.

Ms. Bhutto had not mentioned the assassination attempt previously and only learned of it following the recent arrests and interrogations of six suspects with alleged links to Mr. Yousef, Pakistani officials said.

Police arrested the six men on March 11 in the north-western city of Peshawar and have been questioning them at the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi, near Islamabad.

Mr. Yousef called some or all of the men the night before he was arrested at an Islamabad guest house, officials said. The calls were logged by the guest house staff and handed over to police.

Pakistan and U.S. law enforcement officers kept the suspects under surveillance for about a month before the March 11 arrests, said one official who asked not to be identified.

Ms. Bhutto, meanwhile, has tried to portray her government as a moderate administration faced with threats from Islamic extremists, a powerful drug mafia and archrival India.

Her critics say Ms. Bhutto's government has failed to take strong action to stop the escalating violence and terrorism, particularly in the southern port city of Karachi.

The prime minister came under increased pressure to act when two Americans were shot dead March 8 while on their way to work at the U.S. consulate. More than 500 suspects have been arrested in Karachi during the past week, but none have been charged with any serious crimes.

Pakistani opposition leader Nawaz Sharif announced plans Saturday for talks with Altaf Hussain, leader of Karachi's main ethnic faction.

But Ms. Bhutto ruled out any dialogue with the leader of the Mohajir National Movement (MQM), who has been living in self-exile in London since 1992.

"As long as the killing continues, we will not talk to anybody who indulges in acts of terrorism," she told Reuters in an interview.

Mr. Sharif, a former prime minister, told a news conference before leaving for London that he was going there at Mr. Hussain's invitation in an effort to restore peace in Karachi.

"The strategy for peace is the strategy to save Pakistan, and to save Pakistan," he said, describing the southern Pakistani port as the most violent city in Asia.

More than 100 people, including two U.S. consulate staffers, have been killed in Karachi this month and 340 this year.

"It is the law of the jungle, a free-for-all," Mr. Sharif said. "I see a worse future for Karachi unless peace is restored."

He accused Ms. Bhutto of refusing to acknowledge that there was a crisis in Karachi. "When you don't accept that there is a crisis, then there will be no solution," he said.

Ms. Bhutto dismissed Mr. Sharif's planned talks with Mr. Hussain.

"It's rather ironical because Mr. Nawaz Sharif sent in the army to crush Altaf Hussain," she said.

"Nawaz Sharif first started the proceedings that resulted in the conviction of Altaf Hussain for the kidnapping, torture and near-death of an army major. That is the reason why Altaf Hussain is an absconder from Pakistani justice today."

Pyeonggiang hints at softening stance on nuclear issue

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea Saturday welcomed a hint by North Korea's envoy to the United Nations that Pyongyang was easing its position on the conclusion of a contract with Seoul to build light-water reactors in the North.

Pak Gil-Yon, North Korean ambassador to the U.N. in New York, told Japan's Jiji Press Friday that Pyongyang could consider accepting the reactors if they were not labelled as having been made in the South, but had labels saying they had been made elsewhere.

Welcoming the announcement, a senior official of the Korea Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO) said Saturday: "Given this report is true, Pak may have been told by higher authorities in Pyongyang to tone down rejecting South Korean models."

KEDO was set up this month to finance and provide

the replacement nuclear reactors called for under a U.S.-North Korea agreement reached in October last year in Geneva.

The United States, South Korea and Japan are the consortium's founding members.

KEDO Deputy Director Park Sung-Hoon told AFP, however, that there was still need for caution. "It seems that the North has not changed its course yet," he said.

Another senior Foreign Ministry official dismissed the possibility of accepting a Pyongyang demand that KEDO must drop a phrase in its inauguration agreement that South Korean model reactors will be offered to the North.

"In that case, we would have no guarantee against the possibility that South Korea may end up picking up the bills for other's meals," said the official, who requested anonymity.

South Korea's Yonhap News Agency meanwhile said the North Korean envoy indicated that Pyongyang had softened its demand that a contract between the North and KEDO be signed by April 21.

Yonhap quoted Mr. Pak as telling a group of journalists at the U.N. headquarters last Friday that the date, as stipulated in the Geneva accord, was "not a deadline but a target date" for the signing.

Asked if the Geneva accord would be scrapped should the reactor supply agreement fail to be signed by April 21, Mr. Pak said: "We'll then think about our position."

Earlier, the North Korean Foreign Ministry said Pyongyang would reactivate a five-megawatt reactor and set other facilities back in motion that had been suspended operations under the Geneva accord.

U.S. Ambassador Robert Gallucci, who has led U.S. initiatives to solve the North Korean nuclear crisis, warned that if the North revoked the framework accord, Washington would consider countermeasures, including launching sanctions through the U.N. Security Council.

But Mr. Pak said once a reactor supply agreement was signed, it would be a "matter of course" for North Korea to deal with KEDO on a commercial basis.

When asked to confirm North Korea's position on accepting a South Korean model, Mr. Pak said: "Our position remains firm that South Korea cannot be the main contractor in the construction of reactors."

He added that North Korea did not oppose South Korean industries participating in building the reactors once a decision is made on who will supply them.

China tells Japan not to forget war

BEIJING (R) — China said Saturday it would hold grand celebrations to mark this year's 50th anniversary of the end of the war with Japan and told Tokyo it should never forget the conflict.

"The war 50 years ago brought deep sufferings to the people around the world, especially to the Chinese people," Chinese Premier Li Peng told a news conference

after the close of the annual session of parliament.

"We will never forget it," he said.

"We hope that through grand celebrations the Chinese people as well as people around the world, including the Japanese people, will not forget that war and will not let that kind of thing happen again."

China was a principal victim of Japan's military expansion into Asia in the 1930s which culminated in Tokyo's involvement in World War II.

Beijing is to commemorate Japan's August 1945 defeat with a series of activities, including a new film The Nanjing Massacre, chronicling Japanese atrocities in China.

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New life for League

THE ARAB League which celebrates its 50th anniversary next week is \$100 million in the red. How fitting for the Arab member states to show their indifference if not outright contempt for the Cairo-based Arab organisation than to stop paying their contributions completely and on time!

The 22 member organisation had to borrow \$4.7 million last year to defray its annual administrative costs. Its budget for this year stands at \$27 million out of which only \$20 million has been collected. When the Arab foreign ministers meet in Cairo later this month to discuss this growing financial problem they can expect to find the lack of Arab enthusiasm for and faith in rescuing the League among the primary causes for the absence of full financial commitment to it.

The League has only itself to blame for not receiving the kind of support that it deserves. By any standard, the organisation requires a complete overhaul if it expects to prove its relevancy and effectiveness. Its bureaucracy is anything but productive or imaginative. The infrastructure of the organisation has not witnessed any meaningful review for decades. It is stagnant in more ways than we wish to name. On top of all these problems there is the absence of political will to do anything about them.

Of course we would like to see all the Arab capitals renew their commitment to the League. We would want to see the annual contributions paid in full and on time. But we would also wish to see the League rise up to the challenge of the contemporary era by becoming more vibrant and effective. As it is the League's operations and contributions leave much to be desired. Above all the Arab organisation needs new blood and new ideas. That is why we see the League's crisis as at least partly self-inflicted. As for the woes from the outside, they stem basically from existing archaic ways for decision taking and making.

It is high time that the League went democratic, mainly by amending its Charter with a view to adopting decisions on the basis of majority votes and not unanimity. That way the Arab capitals might have an incentive to renew their faith and trust in what otherwise should be their foremost political institution.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily on Saturday said in its editorial that the activating of the role of the Jordanian-Egyptian Higher Committee and the signing of the minutes of its meetings in Cairo on Friday reflect the exemplary relations that should exist among Arab countries and pave the way for achieving Arab reconciliation on the basis of mutual respect. The newspaper said the joint statement issued at the end of the committee's meetings stressed the importance of having such relationships between the two countries and the need to coordinate their efforts in various fields. It said the statement also pointed to important steps taken by Iraq to implement the relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions and affirmed the need to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people and achieve stability in the region. It added that the statement has also called for progress in the peace talks between the Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese on the one hand and the Israelis on the other so as to achieve a comprehensive peace in the region. The newspaper said coordinating Arab stands, achieving Arab reconciliation, supporting the Arab League, bringing Arab-Israeli negotiations to success and alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people constitute legitimate Arab demands aiming to serve regional security, stability and development. It said these demands also constitute a basis for establishing inter-Arab relations on solid grounds.

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i, Mahmoud Al Rimawi, on Saturday called on the Arabs to review the past achievements of the Arab League, its present role and ponder its future. The columnist said the Arab League is not responsible for the Arab disasters nor the state of weakness plaguing the Arab World, but still the league is playing the role of a "negative witness," which has not seen nor heard anything going around. He said the leadership of the league is doing nothing to address the current situation or activate the role of the league.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Faneek

The lessons from Casablanca summit

AFTER THE Casablanca economic summit (September 1994) will come the Amman economic summit (October 1995). Since the big event in Amman will be a continuation or follow up of Casablanca, it is worth our while to extract and study the lessons from the first summit in order to avoid the short-comings and gross mistakes and faults committed in Casablanca.

First of all, it is not known why the meeting in Casablanca was described as a summit and not as a conference or a festival. Summits normally take place among governments at the level of the heads of state. The Casablanca meeting, on the contrary, was a mixture of governments, businessmen, multinational corporations and all those who could afford to pay the fee and pay their hotel accommodation and air tickets.

The Casablanca meeting was not organised by the government of Morocco, even though King Hassan delivered a ceremonial opening speech. The two organisers were an American private institution, namely the Council on Foreign Relations, and a Swiss private institution, The World Economic Forum in Davos. Perhaps this was the first time governmental delegations take part in a basically commercial and private meeting.

More important, most governments which rushed to attend the Casablanca conference had no idea of its procedures, the machinery of decision making, the text of its declaration and the manner by which differences within the conference can be resolved. For instance, many did not know who had the right to vote. Was it a one-man one-vote system or was it a one-country one-vote one? Would individuals, corporations and governments vote on equal footing? Would such mixed voting be binding for the participants, especially governments? Did the final declara-

tion of the summit/conference represent a consensus among participants and bind them or was it merely a press release which represented the views of the organisers?

Once the Casablanca conference ended and was evaluated, observers were able to conclude that Israel was the major, perhaps the only, beneficiary of the affair. And that was not from an economic point of view as one may expect from a basically economic function, but from a political point of view, as the summit turned out to be a political triumph for Israel. This explains the big Israeli delegation, consisting of nine ministers led by the prime minister. Journalists called their arrival "landing."

The final declaration, which reflected basically an American-Israeli point of view, called for the establishment of a Middle Eastern order, which the participants were not given an idea about its nature and particularities. The declaration called for the removal of the Arab boycott of Israel and the normalisation of relations without any mention of withdrawal from the Arab occupied lands, which contradicts the land-for-peace formula.

It seems that Jordan went to Casablanca having in mind the financing of peace projects to the tune of \$18 billion. This did not impress the businessmen who came to Casablanca to search for profit opportunities, not to finance peace. Nor did this impress the governments, which are not in the habit of pledging millions or billions of dollars in such a popular gathering, without detailed bilateral negotiations.

To add insult to injury, the Arab League secretary general attended the Casablanca summit to sign the Arab order's death statement and the replacement of the Arab order by another Middle Eastern order led by Israel.

US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE CUTS FUND TO UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS



A clash of civilisations: Pentagon rhetoric on the Islamic threat

By John King

UNITED STATES Secretary of Defence William Perry used a NATO forum in early February to signal the growing concern felt in U.S. defence circles about "militant Islam."

At an informal NATO meeting on security concerns in Munich, he presented to America's NATO allies the Pentagon's view of the challenge mounted by Islamist insurgents in North Africa, stating that they threaten otherwise stable regimes with which the West has good relations. The potential for terrorist attacks in Europe or elsewhere in the West, or on Western interests, was in Mr. Perry's view another factor. And a third was the spread of what he called "weapons of mass destruction" — and clearly the U.S. defence secretary had nuclear weapons very much in mind. NATO had a legitimate interest in securing Europe's Mediterranean frontier, and with the organisation seeking a new role after the cold war, the containment of Islamist insurgencies could be a legitimate goal.

Mr. Perry's views are in step with some European opinion. At the opening of the Munich conference, similar views were expressed by NATO's Secretary General Willy Claes, who told the German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that "fundamentalism is just as much of a threat to the West as Communism was"; he added that he did not see how Islamic fundamentalism and democracy could be reconciled. Mr. Claes said that after its success in "winning the cold war," NATO had a new calling to operate in fields wider than those defined by its role as a military alliance. The alliance, he said, "has committed itself to defending basic principles of civilisation that bind North America and Western Europe."

The notion the United States, perhaps with the backing of NATO, could be testing out the idea of taking an active part in this clash is an alarming one. But it is backed up by Mr. Huntington himself, who points out in a follow-up article that the U.S. Defence Department announced in 1993 that it was pursuing a policy of containment directed at both Iraq and Iran, and that it was preparing contingency policies for a major regional conflict against either or both of those states. Perhaps the Pentagon is drawing up plans even now

for yet another regional campaign, against Islamic regimes in North Africa which might follow the overthrow of the present governments.

The reality: foreign policy's reasonable tenor

All this may seem alarming, but in practice — fortunately — the apocalyptic tone adopted by European defence chiefs as they speak about future contingencies does not match the more reasonable tenor of European and American foreign policy as it is at present conducted. Both the United States and the states of the European Union (EU) are concerned to see the present regimes in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt survive as Islamicist challenge. But at the same time there is no doubt that both European governments and the U.S. are also exploring all the policy options concerning coexistence with any Islamic or Muslim-influenced regime which might emerge in any of those three countries, or in Algeria, where the government is most threatened in this way.

Of course France is the European state most concerned with developments in North Africa, and particularly in Algeria. French policy itself is split over the three-year conflict that has followed the cancellation of the election in 1992 which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was set to win. Broadly, Foreign Minister Juppé is trying to encourage the Algerian regime to attempt a dialogue with the opposition — or at least with that part of it which is not committing mayhem in the streets of Algiers or terrorising villagers in the countryside. President Mitterrand seems to back that policy, though his proposal for an EU conference on Algeria has caused great apparent offence to the Algerian regime. Meanwhile in France the hard

line is taken not by the Ministry of Defence but by the Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, supported by Prime Minister Balladur. These two seem more inclined to support the eradication of the faction which believes it can and must stamp out the insurgency by force.

And in the realm of reality, rather than conference rhetoric, the U.S. and Germany also favour dialogue rather than confrontation in Algeria, in the hope of being able to cooperate — in the event — with a new regime of which Islamists are a part. As Washington-based analyst Roger Diwan, writing in *Middle East Report*, recently characterised the current U.S. position, the Clinton administration wishes to signal that "the United States is capable of making distinctions between Islamist groups and is not invariably opposed to political Islam, especially if this would mean avoiding the mistake made in Iran by the U.S. in unequivocally supporting the status quo before the revolution."

It may be, therefore, that there will never be a danger that the alarmist rhetoric of William Perry and Willy Claes could be translated into practice. But the power of the Pentagon — whose views Mr. Perry may reflect — should be underestimated. It was on Pentagon advice that a previous U.S. administration went ahead with an air strike on Libya, almost a decade ago. After that incident, U.S. policy in the Middle East only got back on track as the result of a tacit agreement by Arab and European states not to hold the U.S. as a whole responsible for President Reagan's appalling gaffe. But let us not forget that Ronald Reagan, too, in his own way, thought he was defending civilisation.

Middle East International

Chechens want peace with Russia

By Dzhokar Dudayev
The writer is president of the Chechen Republic

OUTSIDE GROZNY, Chechnya — After an honourable career as a Soviet air force general, I was elected president of Chechnya on Oct. 27, 1991, by a large margin from among six candidates in our first democratic elections. Elections were held for parliament, a cabinet was put into place and a constitution was adopted based on U.S. principles.

The mandate handed to me by the National Chechen Congress, which met in Grozny in November 1990, was to negotiate Chechen sovereignty.

We never signed the March 1992 Federation Treaty, nor have we participated in the new Russian constitution or the Russian parliamentary elections of 1993. Now the Soviet Union does not exist, and we are ready for a new political agreement.

The Chechen government, under my leadership, has always been willing to negotiate a mutually beneficial relationship with the Russian Federation, based on international law. Yet we have found the Russians unwilling and obstructive. I have been the target of seven assassination attempts. Five unsuccessful attempts at a military coup have been mounted against us. Moscow has unleashed a major disinformation campaign, falsely accusing us of being a criminal state and major centre of mafia activities. Attempts by Russian and Chechen authorities to negotiate during this war have been consistently undermined by Russian military and security services.

Chechnya's tragedy is its location. In the 18th and 19th centuries we stood in the way of the czar's expansionist designs on Persia and India. Today the real issue is oil. Chechnya's proved premium crude oil and natural gas reserves, as well as the pipeline between our country and the Black Sea, are critically important to Russia, the Middle East and the West. Everyone seems to jockey for control over the resources of the Caucasus.

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The Washington Post.

Turkish protests highlight public distrust

By Sema Erdem
Reuter

ANKARA — Protests in Istanbul and Ankara show deep public distrust in the Turkish state, which commentators say has failed to reconcile its instinct to clamp down on dissent with its democratic European ambitions.

"The state's attitude is clear. It is tough, and getting tougher, on various groups — the people of the southeast, the Alawites, the Kurds," said Zulfu Livaneli, folk-singer turned social-democrat politician and columnist.

"It's losing its grip somewhat," Turkey, eager to woo the European Union (EU) and increase regional influence, instead finds itself distracted by a decade-long Kurdish separatist insurgency in the southeast, social unrest and serious economic problems.

Mr. Livaneli was one of the few public figures to enter Monday's fray in Istanbul as police clashed with demonstrators protesting against an attack on Turkey's Muslim Alawite community in which two people were killed.

At least 15 people died in the protests, the most violent in Turkey's commercial capital since the 1980s. The violence dampened the euphoria at signing a long-awaited customs union deal last week with the European Union.

The deal had been a welcome boost for Prime Minister Tansu Ciller after her shaky coalition government took a battering from economic woes and social

Russia's recent energy deals with Iran, including Iran's new membership in the Azerbaijan international oil consortium, have already alarmed U.S. officials.

The lure and importance of the Chechen oil and pipeline have prompted Moscow to use brutal force, including needle and cluster bombs, to seize control of our capital, Grozny, and the outlying areas. In doing so, 500,000 of our 1.2 million people have been homeless. Thirty thousand innocent civilians have been killed, both Russian and Chechen.

To stop this terrible bloodshed, we call upon the leaders of the world's democracies, especially the United States and Germany, to intervene. We propose:

— A real ceasefire without preconditions, monitored by international observers.

— Creation of safe havens in nonoccupied territories where people can receive medical treatment and food directly from international humanitarian groups.

— Direct negotiations at any mutually agreed level between the legitimately elected Chechen government and representatives of Russia under the auspices of international mediators.

— The holding of presidential and parliamentary elections in 1995, under international supervision, as foreseen in our American-style constitution.

I would like to declare to the world: We are not secessionists. We are not demanding complete independence. We are not criminals. Nor did we start this war. We have worked hard to seek out peaceful economic and political relations with the Russian Federation, consistently meeting with members of the Russian government during the past three years.

We are a peaceful, ancient, ethnically and religiously diverse people who wish to resolve this crisis through negotiations before the cost becomes so great that democracy and reform will be lost forever in Russia and our own people will have been senselessly decimated.

The Washington Post.

Hidden enemies of a bitter mountain war

By Robert Fisk

IGOUJAL—High in the Kabyle mountains 200 miles south of Algiers, Ahmad Boutdra and his little army of peasants had quite a shock when they shot dead Si Mohammad Mustafa in the wadi behind their village last month. He had been leading a band of Islamists through the forest when he was cut down by a brace of old hunting guns; but what astonished Mr. Boutdra was a note stuffed into the dead man's pocket. "The following have been condemned to death," it read. "Ahmad Boutdra, mayor of Igoujal, his father Si Ahmad..." And it went on to list 28 other men in the village. The grubby paper was signed "GIA," for "Islamic Armed Group."

Mr. Boutdra seems undaunted by the discovery of his own death sentence. Tall and red-faced dressed in a loag, pale brown coat, the former supermarket manager has no intention of abandoning his Dad's Army of threadbare militiamen with their ragged trousers and tattered boots, their often toothless mouths, their calloused hands clutching engraved hunting guns from Brescia, old French service rifles. "Made in Tulle, 1949" it says on most of them — and World War II sub-machine guns with "Waffen SS" still visible on the stock. "All our men are loyal," Mr. Boutdra says proudly. "They will never betray our republic."

Nor, on the face of it, is there any reason why they should. Up here in the Kabyle mountains, where the Mediterranean winds dark blue through the ravines and the hillsides are blackened by massive man-made fires which have burned through the forests that provided night-time cover for the GIA, Mr. Boutdra's 230 militiamen are defending their homes. And they have their counterparts in neighbouring villages, 600 men in all, Berbers fighting the "Islamist" columns which nightly penetrate the wadis on the

way to Algiers or to steal guns from the less suspecting villages of the Kabyle mountains.

"Over there, below Mount Tighrine, the GIA caught two of the men from Bonnamane the other night," Mr. Boutdra says, pointing across the valley to an unburned hill. "A taxi-driver and a shepherd were stopped on the road. The terrorists wanted the taxi and didn't want the shepherd to see them. So they slit their throats and left them beside the road. You see, we have to look after ourselves. The government supports us and the local communal police are in charge." And sure enough, in the village square, a mao called Mohammed Boussoualem in an old blue uniform tells us he is the police chief — which is why he is holding a more modern Kalashnikov to match the corporal's stripe on his shoulder.

As always in Algeria, however, things are not quite what they seem. For here in the Kabyle mountains, many local Berbers are troubled by the growth of the government-sponsored militias, fearful that their real purpose is less to fight Islamic "terrorism" than to repress the Berber Cultural Movement, which is demanding the teaching of the Tamerzigt language in schools and threatening to boycott presidential elections if local universities do not adopt it. Some of the men of the Kabyle mountains, especially those close to the Front des Forces Socialistes party, are more disenchanted with the Algerian government than with the banned Islamic Salvation Front with whom they are supposed to be at war.

Officially, every member of this rag-tag army must be vetted by the authorities, must carry only his own hunting gun, must obey the instructions of the police corporal. But how do you vet the menfolk of every isolated village? And how do you account for the old boy who climbed out of a sheep-wagon in Igoujal with an Italian hunting gun,



A peasant Algerian Berber stands guard outside his Kabyle village

only to admit to me that he didn't know where it came from because "it was given to me by the police?" And how do you explain the fact that Si Mohammad Mustafa, the local Islamist leader shot dead by Mr. Boutdra's men, comes not from far away Medea, as the villagers would have you believe, but from the next village down the mountainside. Si Mohammad was also a local Berber.

Was this not, I suggested to a thin, eloquent middle-

aged man from the Kabyle capital of Tizi Ouzu who had arrived in the village, how the Lebanese war began, with locally recruited villagers turning into gunmen loyal to individuals rather than the state? "Impossible," he roared. "These men are Algerians fighting for Algeria, who are crushing the fascism of fundamentalism." He spoke in French, a language the villagers did not understand; although he turned out to be a man who had good reason to speak the

language. He was Nordi Amirouche, only son of Colonel Ait-Hamouda Amirouche, the most ferocious of all FLN fighters in the 1954-62 war against the French, a man whose systematic purges and throat-slashing of Algerian comrades left 3,000 FLN men and women dead before he himself was shot by the French in 1959. His son was a man — who unselfconsciously referred to the Boulevard Amirouche in Algiers as "The Boulevard of My Father"

— who would know all about loyalty and the lack of it.

It was also in these mountains that the French army found some of its most loyal Algerian supporters, men who would fight the FLN guerrillas and whose fate, often as not, was what the French called "the Kabyle smile," a slicing open of their throats. FLN terror thus cut down many villagers in these remote hills as they sought to protect themselves from the "terrorists" at night, sealing off their villages from sun-down to sun-up. I am my-

self a militant in the Berber Cultural Movement. But we won't be able to speak any language at all if we cease to exist. Here everyone is mobilised for the struggle against the terrorists." And the villagers dutifully chorused the same refrain as they stood above their cherry orchards, their fig trees and potato fields and their sheep pastures, country boys for whom the words "civil war" still do not make sense.

The Independent

King reaffirms commitment to peace

(Continued from page 1)

Prince Hassan visited Bonn last week and held talks with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in a meeting attended by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. During the meeting a joint Jordanian-Israeli proposal for water projects as called for in the Oct. 26 peace treaty was believed to have been presented

to Chancellor Kohl. Following the talks, Jordanian and German officials said Germany had indicated its willingness to participate in the financing of the projects after feasibility studies are carried out on the projects, estimated to cost around \$400 million.

The European Union has

agreed to finance the studies with a grant of 11 million European currency units (about \$14 million).

German economic aid and technical expertise have helped Jordan develop its water and irrigation systems in the Jordan Valley.

German officials say that Jordan ranks as the largest recipient of German aid in per capita terms.

Jordan seeks to present its case

(Continued from page 12)

their confidence that the completion of these steps would remove the remaining problems paving the way for ending the sanctions.

The statement also emphasized the need to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people and achieving stability in the region.

The two sides also agreed on the need to free the Middle East of all mass destruction weapons to guarantee balanced security for all parties, including Israel.

Mr. Kabriti said that Arab League members will have to agree on one of three proposed formulas related to the duration of the treaty. The first, he said, was the

American proposal of an indefinite extension of the treaty. The second was an Indonesian proposal for a 25-year extension, while the third, which the foreign minister believes to be the most appealing, is a proposal of a 25-year extension subject to renewal every five years. The third suggestion, would pave the way for a collective request by signatories that Israel join the treaty after five years when the Jewish state's peace talks with other Arab parties would have materialised into peace agreements, thus eliminating Tel Aviv's claim that Israel remains under threat from regional powers as long as peace in the region is not comprehensive to include all parties concerned.



President Fidel Castro and President Francois Mitterrand during their meeting in Paris Monday

Castro charms the French

By Alister Doyle

Reuter

PARIS — Looking uncomfortable in a sharp business suit, Cuban President Fidel Castro has charmed many in France with his romantic revolutionary aura while repelling others as a communist dinosaur.

Mohamed more like a pop star than a pariah during a rare four-day visit to a Western democracy, he has lunched with President Francois Mitterrand, toured the Versailles Palace of Louis XIV and admitted admiration for Napoleon.

Mr. Castro might have returned home to Caribbean island on Thursday convinced that many French back the socialist ideals of a 1959 revolution that have driven hundreds of thousands of Cubans into exile.

In one crush, at UNESCO headquarters, adoring supporters chanted "viva Fidel" and blocked his path. The 68-year-old leader joked that not since World War I battle of Verdun had it taken such an effort to advance a few metres.

At Versailles on Wednesday, Japanese tourists gaped and snapped pictures of Mr. Castro, reckoning his visit to be an unexpected bonus in the 17th century palace built to

glorify the autocratic "sun king."

Lapping up the attention, Mr. Castro also won warm applause from French business leaders, telling them they had a "historic role" to play in helping the country overcome a crippling 34-year-old U.S. embargo.

"I'm converting capitalists to socialism," he quipped. He said he was too old to be lured to capitalism despite an ideological slide from Marxist-Leninist ideals in wooing private capital to help Cuba out of an economic mire partly caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Forsaking his trademark green military fatigues for cool business suits on his more formal engagements, he has even admitted he does not even know how to do up a tie — and had to get someone else to do it.

"Since my time in the mountains, I got into the habit of wearing comfortably clothes," he said.

Of his grey beard, he said he had saved 10 minutes a day by not shaving since before the revolution. "We did not have time to shave... and later on the beard became a symbol," he said.

Swept round in a tightly guarded motorcade and generally given the honours reserved for important

heads of state, Mr. Castro has been almost oblivious to criticism. "I haven't seen any demonstrations, I'm having fun," he said.

Prime Minister Edouard Balladur sharply distanced himself from Socialist Mitterrand's decision to receive Mr. Castro, and even Lionel Jospin, the Socialist candidate trying to succeed Mr. Mitterrand in May presidential elections, branded Mr. Castro a "dictator."

Exiled Cuban novelist Guillermo Cabrero Infante compared Mr. Castro's French visit to the welcome once accorded to Stalinist Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, executed during the collapse of East European communism.

And the conservative daily Le Figaro said Mr. Mitterrand had greeted "the cruellest dictator of the new world bringing out the Republican Guard: rolling out the red, blood-red carpet."

But many in France seemed entranced by the almost mythical aura of a man who overthrew the Batista dictatorship and has maintained a tropical outpost of socialism on the doorstep of a superpower.

Even Mr. Balladur voiced opposition to the U.S. embargo, which Mr. Mitterrand has called "stupid."

King leaves for U.S. March 24

(Continued from page 1)

Brown. In his Washington talks, the King is expected to emphasise the need to accelerate the Middle East peace process in view of the expected American and Israeli preoccupations with elections next year. Israeli general elections will be held

late in 1996 and the American presidential campaign for the 1997 polls starts in earnest also in 1996.

The King is also expected to meet with American Arab and American Jewish leaders while in Washington.

The King is tentatively scheduled to proceed to the

Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota after the Washington engagements to undergo a routine medical check-up. The King, who underwent surgery at the clinic in August 1992, had his last check-up there last year and received a clean bill of health.

Since then, the King underwent a minor surgery in Austria for an ear infection and related treatment in Amman early this month.

Fateh wants Abbas to head negotiations

(Continued from page 1)

ing the meeting for the way he and his close aides were handling the negotiations with Israel.

Fateh is the biggest movement in the PLO, but the Fateh Central Committee does not have the authority to force him to change the form of negotiations. A parallel meeting of the PLO Executive Committee, the organisation's leadership, was likely to adopt Fateh's decisions.

Observers said chief PLO negotiator Naji Shaath was accused by some Fateh Central Committee members of not being tough enough in the negotiations.

Dr. Shaath said Friday that Fateh had decided to draw up a detailed plan to end the "paralysis" in the negotiations on extending autonomy to the West Bank.

Dr. Shaath and another Fateh Central Committee member were out at Saturday's meeting as they had already left for the Gaza Strip.

The two-day meeting of the 18-strong PLO Executive Committee started on Friday night with 11 members attending. The others, representatives of dissident groups or independents, have boycotted the committee's meetings since the movement

signed the peace agreement with Israel.

A PLO Executive Member said the meeting was debating whether to suspend the talks or shake up the negotiating team.

"We are discussing means to correct the peace process and have negotiations get out of the impasse, including by suspending them until Israel implements its commitments," Saleman Najah said.

"There is a strong tendency toward suspending the negotiations, but this is still under discussion," he told Reuters.

"The PLO is unanimous in considering that negotiations have reached an impasse... and that the Israeli side has not implemented what it committed itself to."

Mr. Najah said the PLO wanted greater international involvement in the peace talks, especially by the United States and Russia which co-sponsored the peace process launched in Madrid in 1991, "because bilateral negotiations do not give us guarantees and allow Israel to escape its responsibilities."

Tunis-based diplomats told Reuters Mr. Arafat met U.S., Russian and Norwegian ambassadors in Tunis in the past two days and told them he was "personally" still committed to continuing

the peace talks.

Criticism of the PLO's handling of the negotiations has increased as peace talks stalled and implementation of key parts of the deal fell behind schedule.

PLO and Israel this month set July 1 as the deadline for an Israeli troop pullout from West Bank cities and towns to expand the Palestinian Authority set up in the Gaza Strip and Jericho. The deadline is one year later than the original target date.

In comments published on Saturday, Mr. Arafat said Israel and the PLO originally agreed to try to complete talks on the next stage of Palestinian self-rule by June.

Mr. Peres announced after talks with Mr. Arafat at the Erez crossing earlier in March that the two sides had set a target date of July 1 to wrap up negotiations on extending autonomy to the West Bank.

But Mr. Arafat told the Egyptian weekly October that "during my meeting with Peres we agreed to continue talks until June 1, not July 1 as he announced later."

"From June 1 we were supposed to start implementing accords reached between now and then including holding elections. But I say 'supposed to' as the Israelis continue to prevari-

Iraq confirms holding Americans

(Continued from page 1)

the mission's headquarters, based in the Iraqi sector of the divided border port of Umm Qasr, the night of March 13.

But they were turned away because they lacked authorisation to be there, he told the Associated Press.

The men were apparently heading back towards Kuwait when they were apprehended by Iraqi police," Mr. Fahmawi said. Part of Umm Qasr was ceded to Kuwait three years ago, when the United Nations redrew the border after the 1991 Gulf war.

A U.N. diplomat in New York said the Americans were trying to visit friends in a Danish engineering unit quartered near Umm Qasr.

Michel Ducraux, chief delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross

in Iraq, told the AP that the Geneva-based humanitarian organisation was seeking to determine where the Americans are being held and what their condition is.

"We're doing our best to get access to them," he said. A Baghdad-based Western diplomat involved in the search for the men said: "We hope it will be quickly clarified... we hope within a few days."

The head of the U.N. force in Kuwait, Major General Krishna Thapa, visited Baghdad Tuesday to ask about the Americans, the U.N. official in New York said. The Iraqis neither confirmed nor denied knowledge of the arrests.

As of Friday, the United Nations had received no response to Gen. Thapa's demand for the release of the Americans and guarantees of their safety, the diplomat said.

Iranians mourn Khomeini

(Continued from page 1)

Khomeini, 50, a staunch defender of his father's anti-Western legacy, died Friday after suffering a heart attack five days earlier.

He was hurried to the right of Ayatollah Khomeini in the huge black-and-white marble mausoleum topped with a dome and four golden minarets.

Ahmad Khomeini had no official role in Iran but he was venerated as the living memory of his father and still

untouchable for the press and clergy.

As a symbol of the spirit of his father's revolutionary brand of Islam Ahmad wielded considerable influence in Iran and had a loyal following among the poorest sections of society.

"We came to say a last goodbye to the memory of the Ayatollah," said a young working-class couple.

Among the mourners were many young "basiji" or revolutionary militiamen.

Kuwait woos foreign investment

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait Saturday announced projects to attract foreign investment into the stock market and said it was considering foreign management and partial ownership of public utilities.

The Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), the government's investment arm and privatisation manager, said state sell-offs were helping prepare the economy for the greater efficiency needed to attract foreign capital.

KIA Managing Director Ali Al Bader told an investment conference the KIA and other major investment houses were considering establishing a Kuwait investment fund to be listed on major international stock exchanges.

"The objective of this fund would aim at introducing new foreign investors to the Kuwait Stock Exchange. It would be managed by an international investment firm and one of the specialised investment companies in Kuwait," he said.

"Laws and regulations are under review to make it easier and more attractive for foreign investors to enter the market," he added.

Only citizens of the six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) may own shares on the exchange, although non-GCC nationals can buy units in mutual funds dealing in Kuwait stocks.

Diplomats say the measures announced by Sheikh Bader are part of government plans to liberalise and revitalise a state-orchestrated economy over-dependent on oil and dominated by inefficient state corporations and ministries.

KIA is on the early stages of transferring its total \$2.7 billion stake in more than 60 local companies to the domestic private sector over the next three to five years.

Officials want to attract back to Kuwait some of the estimated \$60 billion to \$100 billion worth of private investments economists estimate Kuwaitis hold overseas.

The government also plans to sell off major state functions such as the communications ministry and allow foreign management and partial foreign ownership of them.

"The government's policy in privatising Kuwaiti public utilities clearly indicates the necessity for attracting international specialised companies to participate in the ownership and management of these utilities," Sheikh Bader said.

Other projects he announced included:

- A review of tax applied to foreign investors to align it with those in states which attracted foreign investors.
- Possible establishment of a national investment fund to provide equity finance to small businesses.
- Studying the feasibility of creating a company to provide advanced health care in partnership with the private sector.

Arab Gulf states try to rebuild financial reserves

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab Gulf states are trying to rebuild their financial reserves following a decade of erosion due to defence commitments and a decline in oil prices, according to official figures.

From a record \$34.2 billion in 1984, the reserves of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) plummeted to \$21.8 billion at the end of 1990.

At the end of 1991 they surged to \$23.99 billion then fell to \$20.3 billion in 1992 before climbing again to around \$20.5 billion in 1993, according to the figures obtained this week from the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Arab League.

The increase in 1993 occurred despite a sharp decline in Kuwait's reserves to \$3.5 billion from \$5.15 billion. The Gulf emirate is still recovering from seven months of Iraqi occupation that ended with the 1991 Gulf War.

A breakdown showed the increase was caused by a large growth in Saudi Arabia's reserves to \$7.43 billion in 1993 from \$5.9 billion in 1992. But the level is dwarfed by the kingdom's 1984 reserves of more than \$25 billion.

"It is clear Saudi Arabia is trying to rebuild its reserves after they dropped to serious levels because it has been forced to withdraw from

Rising yen hitting hard at foreign loan recipients

TOKYO (AFP) — The meteoric rise of the yen is rapidly becoming a nightmare for developing countries receiving low-interest yen loan packages, which Tokyo has already made clear are not negotiable.

The yen crashed through the 90-yen-to-the-dollar barrier Thursday and stood high as just over 90 yen Friday, a rise of 10 per cent against the greenback over the last two months. Ten years ago, \$1 would have bought 242 yen.

Several countries have urgently requested a renegotiation of their long-term loans, for which they generally have 20-30 years to repay, often with grace periods of several years.

The most recent plea came from China Saturday, when Vice Foreign Minister Lin Shan said that loans taken out since 1979, originally valued at \$10 billion, had now risen to \$16.6 billion, aggravating the interest burden.

Japan, the world's largest aid donor to developing countries, granted \$11.474 million of preferential loans in 1993, some 60 per cent of which went to Asia. 1994's figures are as yet unpublished.

As of the end of 1993, total Japanese development assistance (ODA) had surpassed \$12,500 billion yen (\$138 billion), the majority of which has gone to Asia, with Indonesia topping the list, followed in order by China, India, Thailand, the Philippines, South Korea and Malaysia.

Japan is primary aid donor to 28 countries, 16 of which are in Asia.

"For us, the problem has become very serious," said one Malaysian diplomat in Tokyo. The rising cost of

Oman to launch industrial drive with Japanese help

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Oman will launch a drive to expand its industrial sector with Japanese help as part of a long-term development strategy aimed at lessening reliance on oil, an Omani official said.

The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has drawn up a study proposing an investment of up to \$8 billion in the next 10 years to achieve high growth rates in the non-oil industrial sector, said Mahmoud Al Jarwani, chairman of the Muscat stock exchange.

Between 520 million and 820 million Omani riyals (\$1.35-\$2.08 billion) are envisaged to be spent during the five-year plan.

The final report by JICA will outline several industrial projects that are economically and technically feasible. To attain the targeted growth proposed by the agency, it is extremely important that we attract foreign investment," Mr. Jarwani told a seminar on investment in Oman.

JICA's preliminary study has proposed a growth rate of the Omani non-oil industrial sector of between 13 and 18 per cent annually in the fifth development plan and 16 to 21 per cent in the sixth plan.

It stressed the industrial development strategy should be based on export-oriented products that could target neighbouring Arab Gulf states as well as markets in India, other Asian countries and East Africa.

"The study proposed that Oman follow part of the eighth development plan in India in industrial development," Mr. Jarwani said. "It also noted the significance of

Saudis send aid signal to Syria

By David Makovsky
Jerusalem Post

SAUDI ARABIA has signalled that it may give aid to Syria if Damascus reaches a peace accord with Israel, a senior U.S. official said during Secretary of State Warren Christopher's trip to Damascus this week.

According to the official, the U.S. encouraged Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Faisal to visit Damascus shortly before Mr. Christopher made his trip to the region to illustrate that Riyadh would back Syria — politically and economically — in any peace deal with Israel.

"When Saud Faisal arrived on a rare visit to Damascus, he did not — nor does he have to — say 'if you make peace with Israel, we will give you this set amount of money.' Rather, it is sufficient for him to say 'We support the direction of making peace with Israel.' The Syrians get the message. This is what the Saudi foreign minister did," the official said.

During a meeting in Jeddah last week, the Saudis and five other Gulf states endorsed Mr. Christopher's efforts to bring peace to the Middle East, particularly between Israel and Syria.

In a meeting between King Fahd and Mr. Christopher this week, a U.S. official said the Saudi monarch expressed

them to finance some projects and meet a fund shortage caused by the Gulf War and the oil price deterioration," a Saudi banker told AFP by telephone from Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia enjoyed high financial surpluses during the oil boom 15 years ago, when crude prices were nearly double their present level of around \$17.

Riyadh's budget deficit hit a record \$33.6 billion in 1991 due to Gulf War payments. It eased in the following years through spending reductions to reach a projected five-year low of around \$4 billion in 1995.

Oman, another GCC oil producer, said Thursday it would sharply boost official reserves, which include gold and currency with the International Monetary Fund plus foreign currency controlled by the government.

Omani minister of state for development, Mohammad Al Yusuf, told the Arab daily Al Hayat that the reserves would reach around \$6 billion at the end of the 1996-2000 development plan from nearly \$1.8 billion at present.

The other GCC members are also boosting reserves. In the UAE, they increased to \$5.65 billion at the end of 1993 from \$4.58 billion at the end of 1990 while those of Bahrain rose to \$1.3 billion from around \$1.23 billion. A slight rise was also recorded in Qatar.

his belief that Syria wants peace with Israel.

Saudi Arabia contributed more than \$2 billion to Syria when it joined the allied coalition against Iraq on the eve of the Gulf War. Currently, Riyadh provides \$100 million in project assistance to the Palestinian Authority, but Mr. Christopher appealed to King Fahd this week to reappoint the donation enabling the Palestinians to use a chunk of the funds for recurrent costs and not just project.

The timing of Prince Faisal's visit to Damascus was also important, since there have been reports that Syria is concerned that Republican control of the U.S. Congress — with their vaunted desire to cut the budget — would mean a diminished U.S. capacity to provide aid to Damascus in the aftermath of peace with Israel.

Mr. Christopher has waited for three months to make this trip to the region because he wanted to devote time to meet with members of the new Congress, especially key Republicans, in a bid to ensure that U.S. commitments abroad are maintained.

(David Makovsky was able to travel to Saudi Arabia this week as a result of intervention by senior Clinton administration officials.)

China deputies pass central bank law

BEIJING (R) — China's parliament Saturday passed the first law on the central bank, hailed by its supporters as a milestone but denounced by one-third of deputies as failing to guarantee sufficient autonomy.

"The law on the People's Bank of China, the central bank, places it under the leadership of the State Council (cabinet), with its governor to be appointed or removed by the state president, currently Communist Party chief Jiang Zemin.

It is to have a monetary policy committee supervised by the State Council and which reports to the standing committee of the National People's Congress only for the record.

"This is the best law possible at this moment under current conditions," said one foreign economist.

The law would give China a central bank similar to Taiwanese or Japanese models, he said. With ultimate control in the hands of the State Council, the bank was far from the Bundesbank, widely seen as the world's most independent central bank.

Supporters argued it was the best option given China's incomplete regulatory framework and half-finished transition to a market economy. It is a result of over five years of intensive drafting and redrafting, economists said.

Proponents cited its third article, which identifies the bank's goal as follows: "The aim of monetary policies is to maintain the stability of the value of the currency and thereby promote economic growth."

The bank's primary objective is no longer growth — a target that had previously forced banks to hand out loans based on political rather than economic considerations and resulted in huge bad-loan portfolios across China.

servicing Malaysia's loans has doubled over the past five years, he said.

"We have decided not to accept yen loans any more," he added.

Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahatir Mohamad warned of the dangers of the rising yen for borrower nations during a visit to Japan in October.

"If the yen strengthens, the repayment on yen loans will increase. Only advanced countries are benefiting from the yen's appreciation," he said.

An Indonesian diplomat in Tokyo also voiced concern at the present rises, to which Jakarta as the largest borrower is most vulnerable.

In an attempt to buffer itself against the exchange risks, Jakarta has begun to fill its central bank currency reserves with yen, now accounting for 35 per cent of Indonesian foreign currency reserves, he said.

Nevertheless, in spite of foreign calls for help, Japan has stressed that no loan will be renegotiated simply because of present monetary fluctuations, which it believes have arisen from temporary market speculation.

"We sympathise, but we should respond by taking a long-term perspective," Hiroshi Hirabayashi, head of the economic cooperation bureau, told the budget commission of Japan's Upper House.

He described any reduction in interest rates as "not a good idea."

But Tokyo's approach is not a new one. When the Paris Club slashed Egypt's and Poland's debt by half in 1991 and 1992, Japan promptly froze all loans to the two countries.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY MARCH 19, 1995
By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) A good time to be in the company of old friends you admire. Go to the right source for valuable information you need for your project.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Take time to study a new project that could give you increased abundance in the days ahead and then engage in your favourite hobby for much pleasure in the afternoon.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Put a fine idea to work today and gain the support of congenials. Don't do anything that could jeopardise the present harmony at home.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Take care of chores early in the day so you'll have time for recreation later. Make new acquaintances of worth who could be beneficial.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Contact good friends you have not seen in some time and deepen relationships today. Avoid one who has given you much trouble in the past and would like to give you more in the days ahead.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) A good time to plan for the future so study your surroundings and make needed repairs. Keep active and be free of boredom.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) An ideal day to improve conditions at home so discuss practical ideas and plans with friends and get their fine advice. Strive for happiness in any endeavour.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Recreation is best for you during the early part of the day. Don't begin a new enterprise this evening and avoid trouble which may come your way.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Make sure not to react bitterly to remarks made by a careless person in the morning. Study a new venture that could be lucrative in the future.

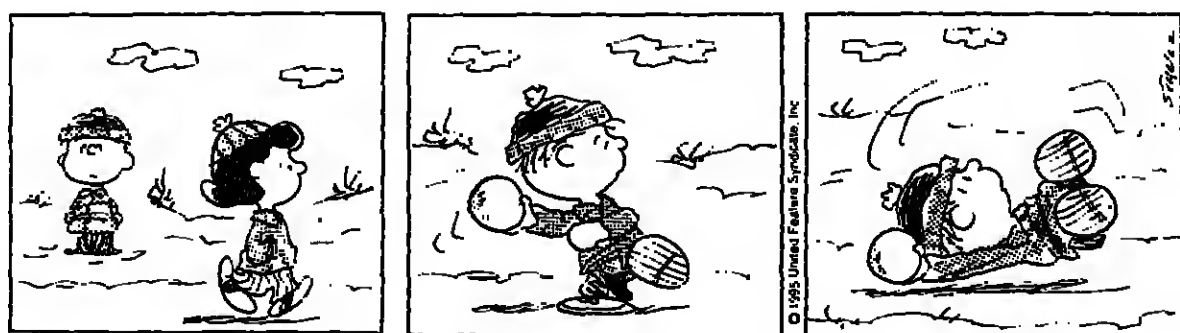
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Talking over mutual problems with friends brings right solutions today. Take steps to improve your health and appearance so that other people will notice.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Make needed repairs to property and possessions that will add to their value. Take no risks today with your reputation in any project or problems could result.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Get an early start at your activities and cut down on tensions by working at an even pace. Establish more order around you and everything will run more smoothly.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

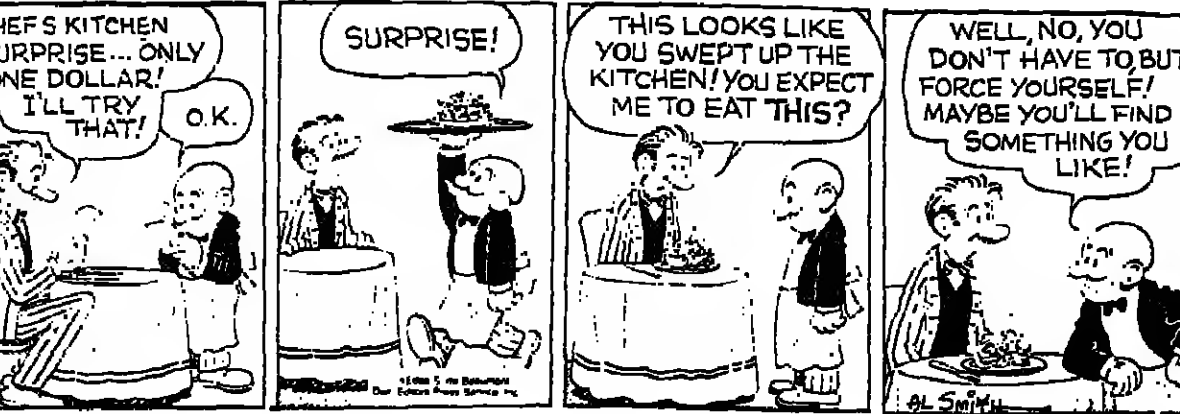
Peanuts



Andy Capp



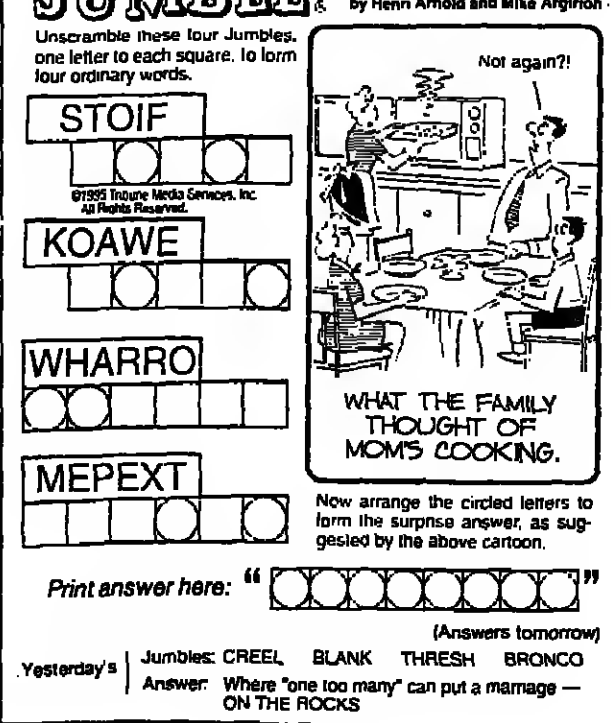
Mutt'n'Jeff



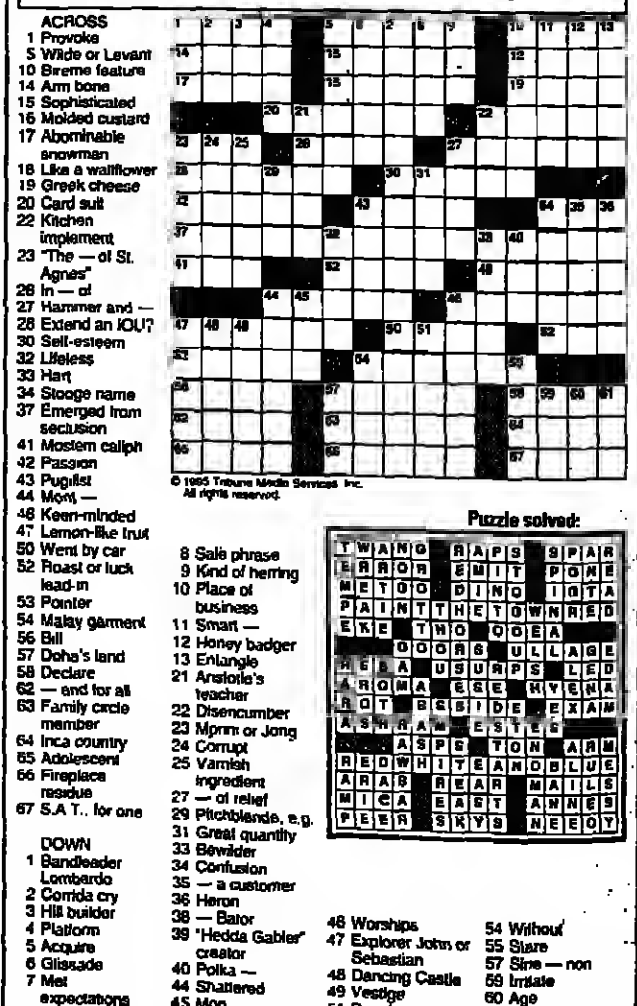
THE BETTER HALF



JUMBLE



THE Daily Crossword



business daily beat

A review
of economic news
from the Arabic press

Government, taxi owners differ on modernising public fleet of transport

★ THE MAJORITY of taxi owners are against a plan being drawn by the Ministry of Finance to modernise the fleet of public transport.

According to the plan, owners of old taxis, service cabs and buses which were licensed prior to 1991 (i.e. 1990 and before) will be allowed to purchase newly manufactured cars and buses exempt from customs on the following conditions:

1) New cars should be manufactured either on the same of purchase or the preceding year at the most;

2) The old car is to be handed to the government at no cost;

3) The buyer undertakes not to turn the new customs-exempted car into a private licence plate vehicle at any time in the future.

4) Should the owner decide to turn the car to the private category, full customs have to be paid.

5) The new cars, however, will be subject to a five per cent import fee and a three per cent additional tax on the cars' value.

Taxi drivers were unanimous in asserting that the plan will only be worthwhile when they are allowed to resell the cars or turn them to the private category without having to pay customs. They argue that the value of their old cars, which are to be handed free to the government, should be considered as an equivalent value for the customs because, in the first place, customs were paid on the old cars.

The General Association of taxi owners says the draft plan is not encouraging and does not provide any incentive for owners of old taxis.

The association's secretary, Fouad Al Badri, points out that only three per cent of all taxis and service cabs could be slated for write-offs and, he adds, this is the same percentage which could benefit of the government plan.

The association says that most public cars in Jordan are of pre-1975 models and that at the end of 1994 there were 15,625 taxis and service cabs registered at the association.

Of the total, 8,835 are taxis with fare metres, 3,125 are service cabs in the Amman area, 1,000 are taxis on internal routes and 1,406 are taxis serving external routes.

There are 1,000 service cabs in the governorates, 154 taxis serving the airport and 105 for training drivers.

Ahmed Karim Al Mashayekh, a member of the association's board, explains that high customs, expensive spare parts, costly fuel and low fares are the main reasons behind taxi owners clinging to their old cars. "If these issues can be tackled, there will be no need to think of plans to modernise the fleet of public transport," he said.

Mr. Mashayekh adds: "Since 1989 the association had been demanding a 10 per cent raise in fares after the increase in fuel prices but without success. This situation in addition to the soaring cost of living in general, has resulted in the inability of taxi owners to renew their cars."

A responsible source at the Ministry of Finance said that after receiving the old cars, the government will look into the possibility of benefiting from some of them. If found suitable, these cars will be used by government institutions instead of buying new cars. Another option for the government is to transfer these cars into the private category and resell them to the public. If the cars are found to be useless, the source said, they will be sold as scrap.

Taxi owners are under no obligation to replace their old cars with new ones although the replacement could be effected within a one-year period from the date of the decision.

(To be continued Monday)

French government salvages loss-making Credit Lyonnais

PARIS (R) — The French government launched a massive bailout for state-owned Credit Lyonnais on Friday but, with an eye on next month's elections, vowed the bank would pay its own way in time and not cost the taxpayer an extra cent.

The plan was so complex that analysts said it was hard to assess immediately how much the rescue of France's biggest bank might cost the state.

Lyonnais, which grew to be Europe's biggest bank through massive expansion in the late 1980s, reported a 1994 net loss of 12 billion francs (\$2.41 billion).

That was nearly twice the 6.9 billion francs (\$1.39 billion) loss in 1993, which triggered a previous salvage operation that cost the nation 23 billion francs (\$4.62 billion).

The bank will spin off assets worth 135 billion francs (\$27.13 billion) to a special state-guaranteed company and sell a further 100 billion francs (\$20.1 billion) of assets over the next four years.

At the end of the day it will be left with just 10 per cent of its once-formidable portfolio of stakes in industrial firms.

Among the assets to be removed from the balance sheet are the MGM Hollywood Studio, which the bank owns as a result of an ill-considered 1990 loan, and its corporate finance arm Altus.

Economy Minister Edmond Alphandery said these measures would stabilise the bank and allow it to show a profit of 500 million to one billion francs (\$100.5 to \$201 million) this year.

"We can't wait to turn the page," bank chairman Jean Peyrelevade told a joint news conference.

The conservative government is under fire for its handling of Lyonnais, which has contributed to Prime Minister Edouard Balladur's nose dive in opinion polls ahead of the April-May presidential election.

Mr. Balladur tried to divert attention from the fiasco this week by denouncing possible fraud in Lyonnais subsidiaries and demanding a judicial investigation, which had in fact been under way for months.

Mr. Alphandery insisted the new plan was merely a safety net to enable the bank to get back on its feet and pay off its debts.

"The state and hence the taxpayer will not have to increase its financial effort," he said.

"The state's action gives Credit Lyonnais time... in time, taking account of the size of its balance sheet and on condition that we put a restructuring plan in place, it is capable of taking responsibility for most of the losses itself," he said.

Under the plan, Credit Lyonnais will effectively hand over a portion of its

future profits to the state. If the assets are sold at a capital loss, the state will absorb the shortfall. But it will also receive any profits made by the holding company.

Although capital losses on the assets floated off were hard to predict, Mr. Alphandery said 50 billion francs (\$10.1 billion) was an approximate figure for the gap in the accounts.

Cash earned by the state from a 20-year interest-free loan advanced to it by Credit Lyonnais and the proceeds of the bank's eventual privatisation would plug that "hole," he said.

Last year's rescue triggered an outcry and calls for a public inquiry. A parliamentary panel singled out ex-chairman Jean-Yves Haberer for much of the blame.

Pending announcement of the latest rescue, which won a tentative green light from the European Commission this week, the bank's non-voting shares were suspended on the Paris bourse, as were shares in defence electronics firm Thomson-CSF, which has a 19 per cent stake in Credit Lyonnais.

Mr. Peyrelevade denied reports that the bank's efforts to return to health will entail slashing its workforce by at least 7,000.

The communist-led CGT Union denounced the rescue as a "suicide plan" which threatened jobs and service to the bank's clients.

Mandela to spearhead S. Africa trade drive in Arab Gulf states

JOHANNESBURG (R) — President Nelson Mandela will spearhead a South African drive for increased trade and ties with the Arab World in an official visit to the Gulf early next month, the foreign ministry has said.

It said Mr. Mandela, 76, would visit Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain during the second week of April. Further details would be released later.

Government officials said Mr. Mandela would most likely not go to Saudi Arabia, the biggest and richest of the Arab Gulf states, because he visited the oil-producing kingdom last year.

He was, however, expected to hold talks with Saudi officials during the visit.

The six countries are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a trade and defence alliance whose members are as keen as post-apartheid South Africa to boost commercial and other links.

South Africa, which sold long-range Howitzers to Oman last year, has been trying to interest Gulf states in its Roibal (red kestrel) attack helicopter, which has yet to find a foreign buyer.

Tony Twine, of Johannesburg-based economic consultants Econometrix, said South Africa's arms manufacturers, whose domestic market was being dismantled now the country was at peace with its neighbours, were anxious to find foreign buyers.

"The (Gulf) Arabs have got lots and lots of petrodol-

lars for their size... they are enormously rich and a very good target for South Africa's trade expansion," Mr. Twine told Reuters.

"We need their oil and they have enormous buying power for South African goods," he said.

Figures for arms exports to Gulf states and oil imports from them are not included in the breakdown of trade statistics at the South African Foreign Trade Organisation (SAFTO).

But Linda Smith, an economist at SAFTO, said the rest of the trade between Pretoria and the Gulf states was heavily weighted in South Africa's favour.

Latest SAFTO figures, for the first 11 months of 1994, showed four billion rand (\$1.1 billion) in an unspecified section in which details of South Africa's oil purchases were obscured during the apartheid era and which has yet to be "deciphered," officials said.

In the same period, South African exports, mainly mineral products, fruit and vegetables, to the six GCC states were valued at 639 million rand (\$176 million).

Fruit and vegetables accounted for nearly 60 per cent of South Africa's 207 million rand (\$58 million) exports to Saudi Arabia and more than 90 per cent of its 138 million rand (\$38 million) exports to Bahrain during that period.

Non-oil imports from the Gulf, mainly chemicals and "transport components," were valued at 103 million rand (\$28.6 million).

Western oil refiners burdened by overcapacity

LONDON (R) — Overcapacity is now a key problem confronting the Western downstream oil business.

Critics say companies have built too much refining capacity and are suffering the consequences of their own over-optimistic demand forecasts.

Others say it's more charitable to say they have been hit by market changes that were impossible to predict.

Either way, the year has not started well for the oil business. "1995 looks bad for refining. I've hardly ever seen it this bad," says Keith Hamm of London-based analysts Petroleum Economics Ltd (PEL).

Profit margins from refining crude oil into products like petrol and diesel have slumped to such low levels that most Western oil companies are actually losing money on every barrel of crude they process.

"Refiners are losing a dollar per barrel where they were looking to make a dollar," PEL's Hamm said.

Norway's state-run oil company Statoil has announced it was cutting throughputs at its refineries in Scandinavia. This follows

similar statements by the European arms of U.S. giants Exxon, Texaco, Mobil and Conoco, Italy's ISAB and AGIP, Norwegian OK Petroleum and France's Elf Aquitaine.

It is the first time so many oil companies have publicly announced such cuts — in the past they viewed this information as a commercial secret.

"I think the oil companies are making a song and dance about it because they are hoping to have an effect on the psychology of the market and make people concerned about the availability of oil products," Mr. Hamm said.

Part of the malaise is blamed by analysts on Russia which keeps pumping out oil products for export in defiance of economic logic.

After paying the cost of freight from a central Russian refinery to a consumer in Germany, Russia would gain more by exporting crude oil directly instead of processing it.

Others attribute the slump in European margins to the loss of about half the 90,000 barrel-per-day gasoline export market to the United States.

Budget cut, lower investment return likely to depress Saudi bank profits

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A slowdown in the Saudi economy caused by sharp budget cuts and a decline in return from overseas investment is expected to depress the 1994 profits of banks in the kingdom, experts have said.

The 12 commercial banks operating in the world's top oil producer and exporter made record profits of around 5.13 billion riyals (\$1.36 billion) in 1993 due to better investment yield and a surge in credits.

But they will not likely reach that level in 1994 due to a drop in credits caused by economic downturn, an increase in loan loss provisions and lower return from overseas assets, mainly government bonds and stocks.

"Some banks made higher profits in 1994 but others reported lower earnings. There are banks which have not yet released their 1994 balance sheets but I suspect the combined profits will reach the 1993 level," said Anwar Ahmad, deputy chairman of the Riyadh-based Consultancy Centre for Investment.

There are several factors for the slowdown in profits, including the internal economic situation and lower return from international markets," he told AFP by telephone from the Saudi capital.

Nine of the Saudi banks have so far released their 1994 balance sheets, which showed combined net profits of 3.38 billion riyals (\$901 million).

The balance sheets, published in the Saudi daily Okaz, showed five of them recorded lower earnings while the Saudi-American Bank made record net profits of around 1.01 billion riyals (\$269 million).

Those with lower profits were the Riyadh Bank, the Saudi-British Bank, the National Arab Bank, the Saudi-Holland Bank and the Saudi Cairo Bank.

The National Commercial Bank (NCB), the kingdom's biggest bank, has yet to release its 1994 results. But it made high profits in 1993 and last year it boosted its capital from only 30 million riyals (\$8 million) to \$1.6 billion.

The increase was prompted by official instructions to boost capital adequacy in line with guidelines by the Basle Committee. It also followed restrictions on credits by the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency.

Official reports showed the total capital of the 12 banks increased by around 12.4 billion riyals (\$3.3 billion) to 28.9 billion riyals (\$7.72 billion) at the end of 1992 and to around 33 billion riyals (\$8.8 billion) at the end of 1993.

This enabled them to boost credits by 13.4 per cent from 117.9 billion riyals (\$31.4 billion) by the end of 1992 to 133.8 billion riyals (\$35.68 billion) by the end of 1993.

The rise in credits and higher return from bonds and stocks allowed most banks to make record profits in 1993.

In a recent study, NCB chief economist Henry Azzam said profits by Saudi banks from their investment in stocks dropped by around 46 million riyals (\$12.2 million) in the second quarter of 1994 against a profit of nearly

74 million riyals (\$19.73 million) in the first quarter.

"Other factors for the expected slowdown in bank profits last year include a rise in provisions for doubtful loans to 164 million riyals (\$43.7 million) from 134 million riyals (\$35.7 million) and an increase in labour costs to 1.16 billion riyals (\$389 million) from around 1.11 billion riyals (\$296 million)."

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 18/03/1995					
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	NEW CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE
ARAB BANK P.C.	280	52620	188.000	187.500	-0.500
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	3850	16978	4.350	4.350	0.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK / NEW	500	2125	4.250	4.250	0.000
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	250	353	1.400	1.410	0.010
THE HOUSING BANK	3100	18662	6.020	6.020	0.000
JORDAN KOWAT BANK	120	349	2.920	2.910	-0.010
JORDAN GULF BANK	6900	8460	1.220	1.230	0.010
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	6526	24535	3.760	3.760	0.000
BEIT ALMAL SAVINGS INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	1050	1050	3.050	3.050	0.000
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	11178	121508	1.080	1.090	0.010
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	250	318	1.250	1.270	0.020
BANKS SECTOR	134611	249087	INDEX NUMBER: 158.30	CHANGE: -0.142	
ARABIAN SEAS INSURANCE	1650	3128	1.950	1.850	-0.100
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	11157	28928	2.450	2.400	-0.050
YAMOUK INSURANCE & REINSURANCE	1000	3100	3.100	3.100	0.000
ARAB LIFE & ACCIDENT INSURANCE	500	1300	2.600	2.600	0.000
INSURANCE SECTOR	14677	36455	INDEX NUMBER: 136.46	CHANGE: -0.022	
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	2086	3245	1.530	1.560	0.030
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER / NEW	1900	2831	1.480	1.490	0.010
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	180	894	5.000	5.000	0.000
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS / NEW	1800	8488	4.700	4.750	0.050
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	2950	9158	3.130	3.080	-0.050
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	350	718	2.050	2.050	0.000
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	575	634	1.100	1.100	0.000
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	500	450	0.900	0.900	0.000
ARAB INVEST. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	500	1740	3.480	3.480	0.000
SERVICES SECTOR	11091	28314	INDEX NUMBER: 129.07	CHANGE: +0.087	
JORDAN TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	110	2970	28.000	27.000	-1.000
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	12899	38291	2.960	2.980	0.020
JORDAN POTASH	1250	6056	4.900	4.810	-0.090
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	352	3273	9.350	9.280	-0.070
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	1000	3510	3.580	3.510	-0.070
THE JORDAN WOOLLEN MILLS	1416	10478	7.420	7.400	-0.020
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	2124	69103	6.400	6.400	0.000
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	250	1488	6.000	5.950	-0.050
JORDAN DARY	2022	4244	2.100	2.100	0.000
THE JORDAN PIPES MANUFACTURING	1000	2705	2.700	2.710	0.010
THE PUBLIC MINING	300	858	2.850	2.860	0.010
SPINNING & WEAVING	3050	7690	2.530	2.530	0.000
RAPIA INDUSTRIES	4650	12887	2.750	2.770	0.020
DAR AL DANA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	7664	59773	7.800	7.800	0.000
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	4500	3527	0.870	0.870	0.000
ARAB ALUMINUM INDUSTRIES	3300	34036	6.400	6.400	0.000
LIVESTOCK POULTRY	19500	13065	0.660	0.670	0.010
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	14850	21185	1.390	1.430	0.040
NATIONAL RETAIL INDUSTRIES	1150	3976	3.450	3.450	0.000
INTERNATIONAL PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	800	923	1.150	1.150	0.000
JORDAN ROCKWELL INDUSTRIES	2042	2222	1.060	1.080	0.020
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MACHINERY	2200	1479	0.670	0.670	0.000
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	2263	2263	4.550	4.550	0.000
JORDAN SULPHUR-CHEMICALS	1800	2635	1.500	1.440	-0.060
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	1900	4384	2.340	2.280	-0.060
EASTERN INVESTMENT	100	165	1.650	1.650	0.000
UNIVERSAL MOORE INDUSTRIES	8100	31264	4.040	3.910	-0.130
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	8650	17317	1.950	2.000	0.050
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	176129	669692	INDEX NUMBER: 119.57	CHANGE: +0.032	
GRAND TOTAL	336508	1003548	INDEX NUMBER: 140.29	CHANGE: -0.072	
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET	92232				
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET	109410				

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Lipton Championships

Philippoussis rallies past Bergstrom

KEY BISCAINE (Agencies) — When Mark Philippoussis started slowly Friday in the Lipton Championships, he showed no panic. The 18-year-old Australian knows that time is on his side.

An ATP tour rookie and the youngest player in the men's draw, Philippoussis rallied for an opening-round victory over Christian Bergstrom 3-6, 7-6 (7-3), 6-2.

At 6-foot-4 (1.9 metres), Philippoussis (pronounced fil-i-poo-sis) hits the ball hard enough to shake loose a few of his consonants, and he's among the game's most promising players. Inconsistency remains a problem, however, as a roller-coaster performance against Bergstrom showed.

"I am definitely going to have a lot of days where nothing will go in," Philippoussis said, "and I will just, you know, get killed out there."

But by the time Philippoussis celebrates another birthday in November, his ranking could approach age. He reached the final in his most recent tournament, at Scottsdale, losing to Jim Courier but climbing from 272nd to 149th on the ATP computer.

Against Bergstrom, Philippoussis delivered 18 aces and lost only six points on his first serve. The right-handed slugger plays Paul Haarhuis next and could face Wayne Ferreira in the third round.

While the young Aussie continued his climb, two veterans in their second decade on the tour posted mixed results.

Thirty-year-old Mats Wilander rallied for a three-set victory, but 33-year-old Brad Gilbert lost and said he'll wind down his career.

"I will just play a few events where I feel good," said Gilbert, who became Andre Agassi's coach a year ago.

Gilbert lost to Todd Woodbridge, 7-6 (7-5), 7-5. Wilander beat Louis Gloria 4-6, 6-3, 6-3. Another familiar name, Patrick McEnroe, beat Horst Skoff 6-3, 7-6 (8-6).

McEnroe notched two of his biggest career victories at Lipton, beating Boris Becker in 1991 and Goran Ivanisevic in 1993. Now, McEnroe joked, he's 1-0 on St. Patrick's Day.

"I called my mom. She said, 'You can't lose — it's your day,'" McEnroe said.

In women's play, 15-year-old juniors champion Stephy Hales of Cyprus, Texas, lost her WTA tour debut to



Christian Bergstrom

Asa Carlsson, 2-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7-2).

All seeded players had a first-round bye, but 33 of the 64 will be in action Saturday. That includes defending champion Steffi Graf, top-ranked Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, Jim Courier and Todd Martin.

Kafelnikov into St. Petersburg semis

In St. Petersburg, Russia, top seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov survived a stress attack to beat unseeded Jakob Hlasek 6-2, 2-6, 6-2 in the quarterfinals of the St. Petersburg Open Friday.

Kafelnikov, the world

number nine, blamed psychological pressure for his second-set scare against Switzerland's Hlasek, his doubles partner.

"I'm tired of the psychological pressure," the visibly shaken Russian said. "I could have forgiven myself if I had lost in my own country."

"Maybe I won't play tournaments in Russia anymore because the pressure to win here is so terrible."

Two other seeded Russians won semifinal places in the \$300,000 ATP tournament.

Fourth seed Andrei Chesnokov triumphed 6-4, 6-2 over 17-year-old wildcard entry Nicholas Kiefer of Germany.

Kiefer, the world's number

one junior, was playing in his first ATP tournament this year.

Fifth seed Alexander Volkov beat unseeded Sebastian Lareau of Canada 6-2, 6-3 to set up a clash with Kafelnikov.

Unseeded Guillaume Raoux of France stopped unranked T.J. Middleton's upset streak by beating the American 6-1, 6-2 to set up a semifinal against Chesnokov.

Raoux frustrated Middleton by rushing the net and winning 80 per cent of his service points.

Middleton, unranked in world singles, had earlier caused a stir by defeating second-seeded Austrian Thomas Muster.

Tomba completes World Cup hat-trick

BORMIO, Italy (R) — Italian Alberto Tomba, roared on by thousands of home fans, woo the giant slalom final on Saturday to clinch a hat-trick of World Cup trophies in a memorable season.

Tomba stormed to his 11th World Cup win in 15 races this season to add the giant slalom to the overall and form titles which he had already sealed.

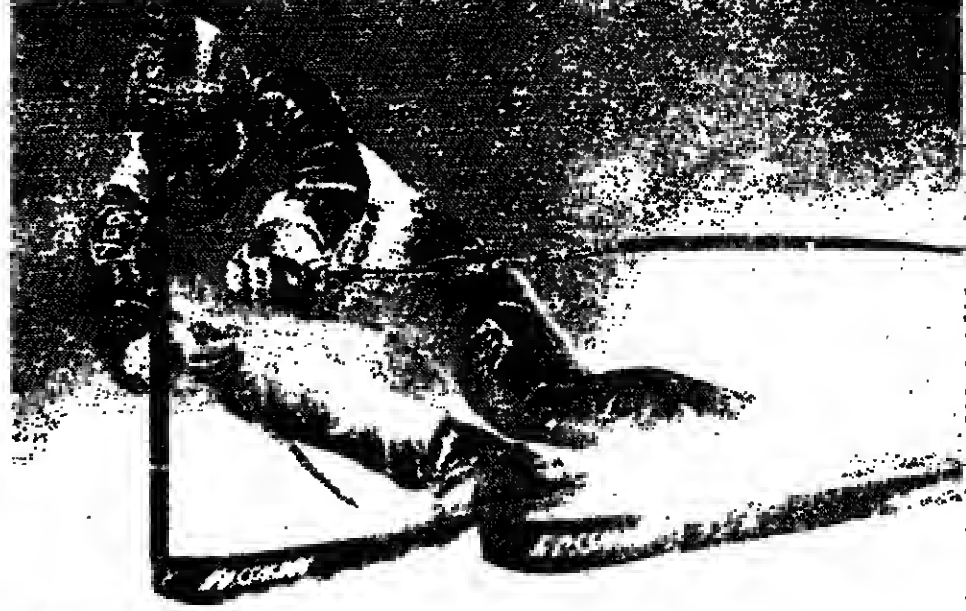
The triple Olympic champion clocked a combined time of two minutes 15.14 seconds on the long and demanding Stelvio Piste, beating Austrian Guenther Mader into second place by four tenths of a second. Ramner Salzgeber, another Austrian, was third.

"I dedicate this win to my parents who are here today. I'm very tired, it's been a long season," Tomba said as the champagne corks popped around him.

Earlier on Saturday, Swiss Vreni Schneider took the women's giant slalom title when compatriot Heidi Zeller-Bachlere, her closest rival, skidded off on the first leg.

But Schneider placed only ninth in the giant slalom and still trails German Katja Seizinger by 76 points in the overall standings. Seizinger was 11th on Saturday.

The Swiss must place either first or second in Sun-



Alberto Tomba

day's slalom final, the last race of the season, to have any chance of pipping Seizinger.

The German is assured of the crown for the first time if she can make the top 10 in the slalom Sunday.

A boisterous crowd of some 30,000 had come to acclaim Tomba, who was assured of his first overall World Cup title earlier this week when the results of the speed events he avoids went against his main rivals.

Competing for the first time for four weeks, Tomba

rose to the occasion once again, claiming his fourth giant slalom win of the season and his 44th World Cup victory in all.

Slovene Jure Kosir, who trailed the Italian by just 35 points in giant slalom going into the race, could manage only sixth place, 7/10ths of a second behind the winner.

Tomba, 28, has made a great comeback in giant slalom this season after failing to win a race in the previous two seasons in the discipline.

He aims to round off the season with yet another suc-

cess in the slalom final here on Sunday, having won seven of eight races in that event this season.

The women's giant slalom final went to Slovene Pretnar of Slovenia, who had never won a World Cup race before.

Pretnar edged out Italian Sabina Panzanini by 3/10ths of a second with fellow Slovene Urska Hrovat finishing third.

The top three times and placings in the women's giant slalom final were later confirmed as official.

Ewing lifts troubled Knicks over Bullets

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Their assist leader is out with a sore leg muscle. Their most accurate shooter has been suspended in a long-running feud with the coach.

But the New York Knicks still find a way to win, largely because Patrick Ewing and John Starks refuse to let them falter.

Ewing scored 36 points while Starks added 21 here Friday to lead the 1994 National Basketball Association (NBA) runners-up past Washington 89-81.

The Knicks were without assist leader Derek Harper in the fourth quarter and top reserve Anthony Mason is out with a five-game suspension for detrimental conduct.

But the NBA's top defense kept the Bullets without a basket for 10 minutes and 39 seconds in the second half.

That and key baskets by Ewing and Starks in the final two minutes gave the Knicks their 12th straight triumph over Washington and their 18th in the past 19 meetings over four years.

"We broke out of the funk somewhat," Knicks coach Pat Riley said. "We've got the smoke cleared. We will just keep moving on."

Combined with Orlando's 107-97 defeat at Indiana, the Knicks (41-21) moved within 5-1/2 games of the Eastern Conference-leading Magic (48-17).

"We have to keep it rolling," Starks said. "We're not going to play out the regular season just to get to the playoffs. People thought Orlando was out of reach. Now we will see."

Mason was suspended for walking off the bench during a game Tuesday. Mason and coach Pat Riley have been at odds since the forward was suspended for the final three regular season games last year.

"We aren't thinking about that," Ewing said. "We don't worry about that. There's nothing else to say about it." Mason has rejected a three-year, nine million-dollar offer to stay with New York when his contract expires after this season.

Harper was sidelined by



Orlando Magic's Shaquille O'Neal (right) fights Indiana Pacers' Dale Davis (left) for a rebound (AFP photo)

hamstring pain he first felt Tuesday.

"The hamstring was sore and I just didn't feel comfortable," Harper said. "You have to be wise about it."

The Knicks had just welcomed back forward Charles Smith, who missed the past five games with a sprained knee. Smith and seven points eight rebounds.

The Knicks have lost three of four meetings with Orlando this season. They meet again April 23 in the final game of the regular season.

with the East's top playoff seed possibly at stake.

"We have to win as often as we can, especially over the teams we are supposed to beat," Harper said. "Hopefully we can build on this and make a run."

Rodman ruffles more feathers

San Antonio Spurs forward Dennis Rodman has a knack for ruffling feathers.

When he showed up late for Thursday night's game against Philadelphia in San

Antonio he said he overslept because his alarm failed to go off.

He didn't mention a flying trip to Dallas on Wednesday to repossess a pet macaw that had apparently escaped there last month.

Daniel Arango of Dallas told police that Rodman arrived at her apartment with six other men and a girlfriend, Stacy Yarbrough of Dallas, to claim the bird, which she had found after it got loose.

She said Rodman swore at her and refused to give her \$1,000 for care and feeding of the macaw.

Yarbrough said she had tried to get the bird back earlier, but Arango's fiancé wanted to meet Rodman in person. She said Rodman offered Arango \$200 for looking after the bird.

Police Sergeant Jim Chandler said no theft charges were planned against Rodman.

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Sports

Havelange hints two 2002 World Cup Korea could host

SEOUL (AFP) — World soccer supremo Joao Havelange believes South Korea has a better chance of staging the 2002 World Cup if it co-hosts the event with North Korea. Yonhap news agency said Saturday.

Japan and South Korea are in an "equal footing" in their bids to host the competition, he said, but he was quoted as saying in a written reply to questions sent by the South Korean agency.

The two football-mad Asian rivals ended up as the only bidders after Mexico withdrew, and both are now mounting multimillion-dollar campaigns to get the nod of FIFA, who will pick the venue in June 1996.

Sources close to Seoul's campaign said there was no question of a joint North-south bid at this point, but

added that if peace came, the peninsula, divided since the end of World War II, could host the tournament as one nation.

If Seoul's bid succeeds, this in itself could be a "catalyst for peace," he said.

Yonhap said Havelange declared that FIFA "never considered the possibility of South Korea and Japan co-hosting."

"It is impossible for several reasons," he said, but did not elaborate. He vowed to remain neutral on the venue "to the last moment as FIFA president or as an objective assessor."

Asian soccer boss Peter Veeleman had said in Kuala Lumpur on March 2 that Japan and South Korea should set aside their bitter rivalry and co-host the World

Cup, which has never been staged in Asia.

The contest has deep political and historical undertones. Japan colonized the Korean peninsula before World War II, after which it was divided into the communist North and U.S.-backed South.

Japan has never made it to the World Cup finals but its professional J-League is immensely popular. It beat South Korea in a penalty shootout to retain the Dynasty Cup in Hong Kong last month.

South Korea has entered the World Cup finals four times—1954, 1986, 1990 and 1994—and its bid is being backed by the Hyundai conglomerate.

Both countries have hosted the Olympics.



Retired basketball star Michael Jordan leaves the Chicago Bulls practice via the back door of the Bertie Centre in Deerfield, Ill. (AFP photo)

Bulls coach says Jordan announcement in three or four days

DEERFIELD, Illinois (AP) — The Chicago Bulls want Michael Jordan to come and play — just out at practice.

Jordan phoned ahead and coach Phil Jackson said he would like to see Jordan at the Bulls practice because of the swarming media contingent.

"I didn't think there was time to come in and practice under this kind of a circumstance," Jackson said. "It's a little too hot and heavy here. We thought we would postpone that."

"He called and asked what was like. I said it was pretty tense over here, stay away for a day, we got nothing to announce anyway."

But Jackson did say an announcement on Jordan's return would probably be made in three or four days.

"We'd like to say he'd be back on Sunday, we'd like to say he'd be back on Friday."

We'd just like to say he'd be back period. But we can't say anything because it's not a done deal," Jackson said.

Jackson couldn't confirm that Jordan was having talks with team officials. He did say he thought there had been some talks Wednesday.

"The parties just haven't come to a time framework," Jackson said. "There are a number of items we could speculate on. I'm not sure what exactly is going on. As Bulls we want Michael to be back. Until we have a situation in which we can announce it one way or the other, we have nothing to say."

The number of reporters and cameramen numbered more than 50 again Thursday.

"The time will come when he has to practice regardless of the amount of media," said Jackson, whose team has

put up with several well-publicized incidents this season, most notably Scottie Pippen's repeated criticism of team management.

"We have had plenty of things to feed off all year — it's just another distraction. This is amazing, no doubt about it. We are all amazed at it."

Jackson said if Jordan is ready to play there would be very little adjustment to be made and he wouldn't be afraid to use him in a game immediately.

Jordan hasn't played in a National Basketball Association game since June 1993 when he helped the Bulls beat Phoenix in game 6 of the league finals for their third straight title. He spent a season playing Minor League baseball, but retired last week after getting caught in the middle of the players' strike.

Key Tapie witness faces perjury charge

VALENCIENNES (AFP) — Jacques Mellick, a key witness for Bernard Tapie in the Olympic Marseille match-rigging trial, admitted Saturday to lying to help the beleaguered businessman avoid charges of witness tampering.

Mellick's confession came as he was picked up by police investigating the possibility of witness tampering during the trial.

In a statement released by his son, Mellick, a socialist deputy and mayor of Bethune, revealed he had not met with Tapie on June 17, 1993 as he had earlier claimed.

The meeting is key to Tapie's defence against charges of attempting to fix a vital French first division match between Marseille and Valenciennes on May 20, 1993.

Former Valenciennes coach Boro Primorac has claimed that he had a meeting in Tapie's Paris office on June 17, 1993 where he was offered money and a coaching job if he would change his evidence and admit he was behind the

scheme. Tapie claims Primorac was never in his office and at the time of the alleged meeting he was in fact meeting with Mellick.

But in his statement Saturday, Mellick confessed he did not meet with the former OM president until the 19th or 20th June.

According to Mellick, Tapie told him there was a conspiracy to bring him down and the deputy mayor immediately offered to do what he could do to help.

Mellick added that he knew the fall of Tapie could lead to the loss of 300 jobs in a Tapie owned factory in the town.

During the trial on Friday, Mellick's secretary accused him of trying to force her to lie in court about the June 17 meeting.

She added that 24 hours earlier Mellick had visited her house and threatened her husband's job at the town hall at Bethune in an attempt to make her change her mind about revealing that the June 17 meeting did not take place.

Mellick admitted going to see Mrs. Krajewski but claimed he had the right to see whoever he wanted.

During the opening of the trial on Monday Jean-Pierre Bernes, the 38-year-old former Marseille general manager, alleged Tapie and Marseille player Jean-Jacques Eydelie had hatched a plot to bribe three Valenciennes players to allow Marseille to win the match.

He said he had followed Tapie's orders when he and Eydelie offered three Valenciennes players 200,000 francs (\$40,000) each to throw the match.

Tapie faces two years' jail and a 200,000 franc (\$40,000) fine for bribery and three years' jail and a 20,000 franc fine for interfering with witnesses. Bernes and Eydelie are also charged with bribery.

The other defendants are former Valenciennes players Christophe Robert and Argentina's 1986 and 1990 World Cup star Jorge Buruchaga. Robert's wife, Marie-Christine, is charged with complicity.



Bernard Tapie

America's Cup Preparation continues for semifinals

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Two weeks of pooping by the Pacific Ocean have required boat sheds to work round the clock in preparation for the America's Cup semifinals.

Pact 95's Young America, leader in the Defender standings after the fourth round-robin, is expected to be launched just six hours before its opening race against the America's Cup women's crew aboard Mighty Mary.

Young America has been in the shed since Sunday, when the bottom of its hull was seriously damaged by a strong wave while it was being towed out for a training sail.

"The lack of a whole week of practice right before the semis is significant," Pact 95 president John Marshall said on Friday.

Unlike the other two defence syndicates, Pact 95 doesn't have a backup boat. However, key members of the crew have gone out on two etchells 22 boats to work on match-racing techniques.

"Everybody's certainly fired up and ready to go sailing," Marshall said. "One thing about sailors at this

level is that keeping them off the water is making them hungry. They're anxious to get on the water and go racing."

Young America has been in first place or tied for first after each round-robin. It has two bonus points entering the semis while Dennis Conner's Stars and Stripes has one and Mighty Mary's women's crew none.

This is the knockout round, with one of the yachts being eliminated. Victories are worth one point apiece, and each yacht will race four times against each of the others.

This is the second time that Young America has been in the repair shed this year. In early January, freak winds rocked it in its storage cradle, causing serious damage that delayed its competitive debut by two days.

On the Challenger side, one Australia will face Nippon, while Team New Zealand will deviate from the norm and introduce its older yacht when it faces oatiional rival NZL-39. Each challenger will race four times against each of the others.

One Australia has been working overtime on its year-old backup yacht, which was pressed into service after the syndicate's new yacht broke in two and sank on March 5.

"The boat's almost been totally rebuilt," said skipper John Bertrand, who upset Conner to win the Cup in 1983.

Bertrand said his crew is in good spirits. "We're going to win the America's Cup," he said.

"It'll be tougher to win from this point. The objective has always been to use every race as a steppingstone to the final goal."

NCAA basketball glance

East Regional

Stanford 70, North Carolina Charlotte 68 Massachusetts 68, St. Peter's 51

Southeast Regional

Iowa State 64, Florida 61 North Carolina 80, Murray State 70

Midwest Regional

Syracuse 96, Southern Illinois 92 Arkansas 79, Texas Southern 78

West Regional

Utah 76, Long Beach State 64 Mississippi State 75, Santa Clara 67

Austrian Airlines holds bowling championship

Austrian Airlines held a reception for Travel Agents on Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday 13/14/15 March 1995 to which a bowling championship was included.

Mr. Sami Abu Alsoud, Austrian Airlines Manager in Jordan, in cooperation with the Austrian Tourist Board, Vienna Tourist Board and the Commercial Attache of the Austrian Embassy, handed-over the prizes to the winners and to those teams who had bad luck in winning.

First prize was given to the team of Mr. William Nasrawi.

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NORTH
♦ 10 6 5 2

♠ A Q J 4

♥ 4

♣ 3 7 6 3

WEST
♠ A J

♥ K 8 5 2

♠ 10 6 7 5

♣ A Q 10

EAST
♦ K 7

♠ 6 6 3

♥ Q 6 6 3

♠ A K J 2

♣ 8 5 4 2

SOUTH
♦ Q 6 6 4 3

♠ 10 7

♥ A K J 2

♠ A 9

Opening lead: Ten of ♣

Just because you're ahead after clearing the last hurdle doesn't mean you've won the race. Be careful you don't fall on the last strides to the tape.

North's leap to four spades over the takeout double was a little aggressive. However, the king of hearts ratted to be in the doubler's hand, so North's holding was better than it looked.

The opening lead appeared to give declarer a trick, but that's an illusion—losing diamonds could be ruffed in dummy. There were two pure trump losers and the ace of clubs. Declarer's problem was to avoid a second club loser, since the ace ratted to be with West.

The immediate obstacle to clear was obvious—South could not afford to let East gain the lead. So the

ten of hearts was run at trick two. When that succeeded, declarer repeated the finesse, then discarded a club on the ace of hearts. Flushed with success, declarer led a trump, ducked to West's jack. West cashed the ace of clubs, then reverted to the king of hearts. East ruffed with the king to complete the defensive book and the ace of trumps was the setting trick. A good effort by declarer slipped away at the last moment.

Success was in declarer's grasp. After discarding a club on the ace of hearts, declarer should have led the table's remaining heart and shuffled the king of clubs regardless of what East does. After that loser-on-loser play, the defenders can score no more than two trump tricks to go with the heart trick in their bag.

U.S. seeks more military access to Gulf — Perry

JEDDAH (Agencies) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry on Saturday called for guarantees of American access to ports and air bases in the Gulf to counter potential threats from Iraq and Iran.

Mr. Perry, starting a six-day visit to the region, also called for more joint military exercises with Gulf states and said he will press Saudi Arabia and other states in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to bolster joint defence readiness.

Mr. Perry is also aiming to stop U.N. oil sanctions on Iraq being flouted and amid a U.S. offensive against Iran. The United States is hoping to end the alleged smuggling of Iraqi oil through the Gulf in direct violation of the U.N. sanctions imposed in August 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait.

A statement published in Riyadh on Thursday by the U.S. embassy said Mr. Perry was hoping to boost the U.S. presence in the Gulf as well as keep up pressure for continued U.N. sanctions on Iraq.

His visit comes less than a week after U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher held talks with Gulf officials and leaders in Jeddah.

Mr. Christopher had also asked Gulf states for more facilities for the U.S. Navy which has patrolled the Gulf waters since 1990 to enforce the trade embargo on Iraq.

Since last October when an Iraqi troop build-up on the border with Kuwait prompted a massive U.S. and allied deployment in the region, 12 ships have been boarded in the Gulf for alleged sanctions-busting.

Gulf traders working for Western oil companies say cheap Iraqi oil is transited via Iran.

It is carried on small boats and arrives in the Gulf where it is re-sold at below market prices.

The same traders say the United States has stepped up controls since the start of the year, after closing their eyes to the trade for some time.

The New York Times in February said Iraq had managed to earn \$800 million in 1994 from its oil contraband.

Mr. Perry's visit also comes after U.S. President Bill Clinton on Wednesday signed an

executive order banning oil companies from deals to exploit Iran's oil and gas resources leading to the cancellation of a \$1 billion deal with U.S. firm Conoco.

Mr. Perry said he will assure the Gulf states of U.S. commitment in case of a repeat of the 1991 Gulf war with Iraq.

"We will be planning and proposing joint exercises, both bilateral between ourselves and the other nations, and will be trying to encourage joint exercises among the Gulf countries," Mr. Perry told reporters travelling with him to Jeddah from Washington.

He was scheduled to hold talks with King Fahd on Saturday night and at the start of a two-day visit to Saudi Arabia before going later to Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

Stressing a U.S. strategy of "dual containment" of Iraq and Iran, Mr. Perry said that Baghdad had steadily rebuilt its military capability since the Gulf war four years ago. He repeated U.S. charges that Iran was making an unnecessary military build-up on islands at the neck of the Gulf.

"Our experience with Saudi Arabia has been that, in a crunch when we need support from them, we get it," Mr. Perry said when asked about continued Saudi refusal to allow U.S. tanks and other equipment to be based on its soil for emergency use.

But he said airfields and ports in the Gulf, especially in Saudi Arabia, were crucial to movement of U.S. forces in case of new hostilities. Saudi Arabia has built some of the world's most modern military air bases.

A diplomat in Riyadh said Mr. Perry would chair a meeting of the Central Command of the U.S. forces in the Gulf, based in Bahrain. About 18,000 U.S. troops are based in the Gulf.

In Kuwait he will inspect members of the U.S. Air Force stationed in Al Jaber, and would thank Bahraini authorities for "the facilities they have been giving for several years to U.S. forces in the archipelago," the diplomat added.



KING MEETS BAHRAINI MINISTER: His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday received Bahraini Information Minister Tareq bin Mubarak Al-Khazal. The King and the Minister discussed the bilateral relations and ways of enhancing them. During the meeting that was held at the Royal Court, Mr. Mubarak voiced his admiration of Jordan's role and stand vis-a-vis the Palestinian cause. He said Jordan has offered a lot to the Palestinian people. "What Jordan has achieved on the path of achieving comprehensive and permanent peace in this region serves the interest of all peoples in this region and future generations," Mr. Mubarak said.

Jordan seeks to present its case for lifting Iraq sanctions

By Natasha Bukhari
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan, adversely affected by the United Nations Security Council sanctions imposed on Iraq, wants to participate in the council's deliberations over the issue, Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti said Saturday.

"Jordan's adherence to the terms of sanctions imposed against Iraq, once the Kingdom's largest trade partner, has inflicted great damage on us, which gives us the right to negotiate the possibility of lifting or easing the sanctions," Mr. Kabariti told the Jordan Times.

He said that under Article 50 of the U.N. Charter, Jordan has the right to negotiate with the Council over the issue.

He added that Iraq's compliance with a significant number of U.N. resolutions should be equally met by steps towards easing sanctions.

"In agreement with most other countries in the world, Jordan believes that human suffering in Iraq should be put to an end, and that tearing the country apart poses a greater, more general and comprehensive danger than that of granting Iraq its natural role in the Arab World," Mr. Kabariti emphasised.

Mr. Kabariti discussed the issue last night with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz, who was on a short visit to the Kingdom.

The U.N. sanctions were imposed on Iraq after Baghdad invaded Kuwait in 1990. Attempts by some Security Council members to ease

sanctions have been countered with stiff American opposition.

An Arab League Council meeting on March 22 will also address the sanctions against Iraq as well as the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which will come under review by the United Nations in April.

A two-day meeting of the Jordanian-Egyptian higher committee in Cairo last week brought the Jordanian and Egyptian stands towards Iraq closer as evidenced by the meeting's final statement.

The statement said the two sides believed that important steps were taken by Iraq in the right direction towards implementing the relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions and underlined

(Continued on page 7)

Oman defends calls for easing of Iraq sanctions

MUSCAT (Agencies) —

Oman on Saturday defended calls to ease the U.N. embargo on Iraq saying it was not trying to harm the interests of Kuwait or create divisions with other Gulf countries.

"What we do may seem to be prejudicial in the eyes of our Kuwaiti brothers and in other Gulf countries, but in the long-term it will be very useful to them," Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Yusuf Ben Alawi Ben Abdullah said.

"What the sultanate wants to highlight is the suffering of the Iraqi people because of the embargo and that question cannot be the subject of differences between our brothers in the GCC," he told the Omani daily Oman.

Oman, which is a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, is also part of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) along with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

On Monday the Security Council decided to maintain the embargo imposed on Iraq when it invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

But Oman, like Qatar, has pleaded for the crippling oil and trade embargo to be eased.

Mr. Ben Alawi also defended a visit to Muscat by Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahaf earlier in March saying it "was not a breach within the GCC nor a success for Iraqi diplomacy."

"For Iraq it was the chance to listen to Oman's advice, which is equally a member of the Security Council, about the need for Baghdad to conform fully with the U.N. resolutions."

"We repeated to Mr. Sahaf that Baghdad must solve the issue of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and the goods seized in Kuwait during the invasion," he said.

Mr. Sahaf visited Doha and Muscat on March 10 and 11 to lobby for a lifting of the embargo arguing that Iraq complied with U.N. Gulf war resolutions on disarmament and recognising Kuwait's sovereignty.

The visits by Mr. Sahaf to Oman as well as Qatar were the first by a senior Iraqi official to a Gulf Arab state since Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

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Spanish princess marries

SEVILLE, Spain (Agencies) —

Spain's Infanta Elena married Castilian nobleman Jaime de Marichalar on Saturday in a glittering spring ceremony accompanied by the music of Mozart and Handel and an overwhelming scent of orange blossom.

Brilliant sunshine bathed the Andalusian capital Seville for Spain's first royal wedding in almost a century, witnessed by monarchs past and present from around the world and a television audience of several hundred million.

The Infanta, eldest daughter of King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia, and her groom took the marriage vows at the massive high altar of the city's majestic gothic cathedral, led by the archbishop of Seville, Monsenor Carlos Amigo.

The cathedral was packed with 1,300 invited guests including representatives of royal families from Europe, the Middle East and Asia, the entire Spanish government headed by Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez and leaders of Spain's 17 autonomous regions.

Queens Paola of Belgium and Beatrix of the Netherlands, Prince Rainier of Monaco and the Sultans of Brunei and Oman were among reigning monarchs present at the wedding, which has riveted the attention of millions of Spaniards for weeks.

Britain's Prince Charles came straight from a state visit to Morocco to be in Seville beside princess and princesses from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Thailand.

The wedding was the first royal marriage in Spain since King Alfonso XIII married Princess Victoria Eugenia of Battenberg in 1906, an occasion marked by a failed assassination attempt against the king by a Catalan anarchist.

"Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful," a Spanish television commentator covering the event live remarked as the Infanta, the king's eldest child aged 31, made her way in procession into the cathedral alongside her father, who was bedecked in military uniform.

Archbishop Amigo, who on Friday criticised the frenzied media coverage saying it detracted from the religious character of the ceremony, led the couple through their vows.

Egypt will press NPT to include Israel — Musa

MUSCAT (AP) — Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa was quoted Saturday as saying Cairo would not drop its demand that Israel sign the global nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) — a row that has strained ties between the two Mideast peace partners.

"There is no recanting. This is an issue related to the security of Egypt, Arab security and regional security," Mr. Musa told the London-based Arabic daily Al Hayat.

"There is no compromise solution," said Mr. Musa, who was interviewed in Oman during a visit to the sultanate with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The Egyptian delegation flew home Saturday.

Israel has never admitted to the possession of nuclear weapons, but is believed to have about 200 warheads. It has resisted Arab demands for opening its facilities to international inspection.

The NPT, signed by about 160 countries, comes up for renewal in Geneva next month.

During a recent Middle East shuttle, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher sought to enlist support for Washington's campaign for an indefinite extension of the treaty.

But Mr. Musa stressed that Cairo's stand was "clear and categorical" in rejecting such an extension "as long as the

Israeli stand has not moved towards joining the treaty or establishing a nuclear free region in the Middle East."

Syria, Iraq and other Arab countries have backed this stand.

Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, becoming the first Arab country to do so. The row over the nuclear pact is one of the most serious between the two states in 16 years.

The NPT, the Middle East peace process and the U.N. blockade of Iraq were key topics discussed by Mr. Mubarak and Oman's Sultan Qaboos during the visit.

Mr. Musa said Egypt backed Oman's call for easing the international embargo in force against Iraq since its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"The suffering of the Iraqi people cannot and must not continue," said Mr. Musa. "We must behave as Arabs in the direction of lifting the sanctions and ending the hardship of the Iraqi people."

Mr. Musa complained that Arab-Israeli peace talks were "in a state of fatters" because Israel was not committing itself to a land-for-peace settlement.

He said his country rejected Israel's "foot-dragging, and non-categorical commitment to the peace process. We also refuse that the peace be established Israeli conditions..."

Israeli gunboats fire at Lebanese fishermen

TYRE, Lebanon (Agencies) —

Israeli gunboats fired at Lebanese fishing boats from the southern port of Tyre on Saturday for the second time in three days, a fisherman's union spokesman said.

Mohammad Bawab told AFP that three Israeli boats opened heavy machinegun fire at fishermen between Tyre and nearby Rashidiyah, around 85 kilometres south of Beirut.

"In a panic the fishermen turned back," he added.

Three Israeli warships were patrolling one kilometre off the coast near Tyre Saturday and sprayed jets of water at fishing boats trying to sail further out to sea, a correspondent reported.

The new incident came eight days after Israel announced the lifting of a maritime blockade it had enforced against southern Lebanese ports since Feb. 8.

The blockade, which affects a thousand fishermen, was lifted after an intervention by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher during a Middle East swing.

Fishermen from Sidon and other ports north of Tyre sailed without interference, apparently indicating that Israel was not reimposing the

fishing blockade.

Israeli Deputy Defence Minister Mordechai Gur said the blockade was aimed at putting pressure on the Lebanese government to halt the anti-Israeli guerrilla attacks by the Iranian-backed Hizbollah.

Meanwhile, a fighter of the pro-Syrian Amal movement was seriously wounded in South Lebanon in an armed clash with the rival Hizbollah, police said Saturday.

Members of Amal and the Iranian-backed Hizbollah exchanged light arms fire late Friday at Torat near Tyre, 85 kilometres south of Beirut, for reasons as yet unknown, they said.

The two rival groups have been bitter rivals since fierce fighting between them in 1988 and 1991.

Fears of reimposition of the blockade were aroused on Thursday when gunboats fired machinegun volleys at Tyre fishing boats which sailed out to sea, hitting one but causing no injuries.

Sidon fishermen said Israeli gunboats watched from a distance on Saturday as they fished three kilometres offshore — outside the one kilometre limit imposed during the blockade.

Thousands of Alawites stage protest in Germany

COLOGNE, Germany (Agencies) — Thousands of supporters of Turkey's minority Muslim Alawite community took to the streets in several German cities on Saturday to demand an end to violence against the group in Turkey.

Organisers said other Alawite demonstrations were being held in Vienna, Innsbruck, Zurich and Paris.

In Cologne, police said about 20,000 people took part in a march called to denounce an attack by unknown gunmen on Alawite coffeeshops in Istanbul. The incident sparked four days of riots in Turkey this week.

In Istanbul, assailants hurled firebombs at three banks overnight, causing minor damage but no injuries, police said.

No one claimed responsibility for the explosions which came in the wake of violence that shook this Metropolis of 12 million earlier this week.

Alawite leaders said at least 30 people died in the rioting during which witnesses say police opened fire on demonstrators.

Previously leaders had said 34 were killed. Turkish officials have said that 17 people died in the clashes in two Istanbul neighbourhoods.

The protests were brought under control after police were withdrawn from riot-hot areas and soldiers moved in.

Prime Minister Tansu Ciller has promised an investigation into the demonstrations.

Officials from the Alawite Hadi Bektasi Veli association in the Gazi neighbourhood, where the protests started, said another 45 people were

still unaccounted for and 296 were wounded.

German police, edgy after a series of firebomb attacks against Turkish property in Germany that have been blamed on Kurdish extremists, said Saturday's Cologne march went off peacefully.

Germany's 1.8-million-strong Turkish community has been unsettled by the firebombings, which police warned could increase with the approach of Tuesday's Kurdish New Year. The date is a traditional focus of guerrilla activity by the outlawed Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

Organisers from the union of Alawite communities in Europe estimated the turnout at the Cologne rally at about 50,000.

"We will not forget the massacre," Ali Ritzan-Gulciek, the group's chairman, told the crowd. He called for international solidarity to end repression of Alawites in Turkey.

Its spokesman, Hidir Temel, urged chancellor Helmut Kohl to use Bonn's influence with Ankara to help protect the Alawites.

Marches by Alawites and Kurds in other cities made Germany the backdrop against which minorities in Turkey could vent their displeasure with the government in Ankara.

About 600 supporters of the Alawite cause marched in the German financial centre of Frankfurt, and 300 gathered in the northern port city of Hamburg. Police said around 500 protesters demonstrated peacefully in Hanover on Saturday.

S. African woman relives meeting with royalty

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — One of the South African's fondest memories is presenting a basket of proteas, the national flower, to then-Princess Elizabeth on her 21st birthday 48 years ago. Pare relived the experience Friday when the royal yacht Britannia sailed nearby Simons Town harbour ahead of Britain's queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, who arrive by airplane Sunday for a symbolic weeklong visit. Now 76, Ms. Pare was on hand to deliver another bunch of proteas and was delighted to be taken on board by the crew of Britannia to leave them. She is looking forward to meeting the queen at a tea party Tuesday. A dedicated royalist, Ms. Pare has travelled to London every year since 1974 to present proteas to the Queen Mother, whom she met for the first time last year. "I didn't realise how small she was, but she was absolutely enchanting and said she had such happy memories of Cape Town. Britain's royal family visited South Africa in 1947, a year before the National Party won elections that ushered in 46 years of rule and the apartheid era of racial segregation that made South Africa an outcast from the Commonwealth. Though die-hard royalists of Ms. Pare's kind are rare these days, the queen's weeklong visit marks South Africa's return to the global fold following last year's first all-race elections.

Yeltsin sacks Bolshoi chief, orders changes

MOSCOW (AP) — President Boris Yeltsin stepped into the bitter feud at the Bolshoi theatre, firing the general director and ordering reforms to try to halt dissension that has rocked its world-famous ballet. Mr. Yeltsin sacked Vladimir Kokonin and said he would be transferred to another, unspecified job. Culture Minister Yevgeny Sidorov was quoted by the daily Izvestia Friday as saying Mr. Kokonin had "destroyed the theatre."

The president also issued a second decree abolishing the general director's post and declaring that the Bolshoi would be managed by its artistic and executive directors. Those officials, he said, should be appointed by the government within a week.

Underlying the uproar over the Bolshoi, which burst onto the front pages of the nation's newspapers this week, is worry that Russia's prized cultural jewel is becoming increasingly tarnished.

The 219-year-old theatre has suffered in recent years from poor funding, bickering and the flight of talent abroad. The Kremlin actions came eight days after the resignation of the Bolshoi's long-time artistic director, who was disgruntled over the pending change to a contract hiring system. The night after Yuri Grigorovich quit as artistic director, 14 dancers staged a last-minute walkout that cancelled a performance of Romeo And Juliet, for the first time ever. Mr. Kokonin called the move illegal and sued the dancers — apparently the last straw for the Kremlin. Bolshoi patrons booed the strike, and the media added their jeers and fust. "Bolshoi shame," blared a headline in the daily Segodnya this week. "The Bolshoi is our national wealth. Izvestia said. If the theatre is allowed to collapse or split, 'this would be a crime."

Japan boy hangs self after reading suicide manual

TOKYO (R) — A 13-year-old Japanese schoolboy who had read a suicide manual hanged himself in a forest north of Tokyo, police said Saturday. The parents of the boy, whose name was withheld, told investigators they had recently found him reading a book on ways to commit suicide. A police spokesman said, "The boy also recently talked to his family about wishing to commit suicide," the spokesman said.